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AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM

THE BISHOP PADDOCK LECTURES
FOR 1923

BY

A. E. J. RAWLINSON, B.D.

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EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF LICHFIELD

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To
R. G. C.

PREFACE

THE unlooked-for invitation which came to me a year ago to deliver a course of lectures on the Bishop Paddock foundation in the General Theological Seminary, New York, was accompanied by the suggestion that I should select as my subject the relations between Authority and Freedom in Christian theology and life, and that I should develop further the line of thought adumbrated in a paper which I had read to the Anglo-Catholic Congress in Birmingham in 1922, and which was published as a pamphlet under the title of *Catholicism with Freedom*.¹

I have accordingly devoted the first of these lectures to the discussion in general of the antithesis between Authority and Freedom in religion, the second to a consideration of Roman Catholicism, the third and fourth to the history of Protestantism, regarded as having issued in a progressive reaction against Authority.

The main thesis of the book is to the effect that a synthesis is both possible and necessary between Authority and Freedom, and at the same time between 'Evangelical' and 'Catholic' Christianity. Infallibility, whether of the Church or of the Bible,

¹ *Catholicism with Freedom: An Appeal for a New Policy*. (Longmans, Green & Co., 16 pp., 1922.)

PREFACE

is frankly abandoned ; but it is maintained that respect for individual freedom is compatible with the recognition of authority as being in a real sense inherent both in the revelation of God in history and also in the interpretation of such revelation by corporate experience and tradition : at the same time that the weight attaching to the latter form of authority (the authority, that is to say, of corporate *consensus*) varies directly with freedom of thought and of criticism, and inversely with the extent to which unanimity is secured only by methods of discipline. The fifth lecture, which deals with the Authority of Revelation, attempts to consider both the nature of Divine Revelation as such, and also the problem of the relation of Christianity to other religions. A chapter on Sacramental and Institutional Religion is followed by a concluding lecture on Evangelical Catholicism as the ideal of the future, in which I have attempted some estimate of the future policy of the Church of England, in relation both to existing ecclesiastical problems and to the possibilities of Christian Reunion.

My indebtedness to a large number of books and writers, and in particular to certain of the writings of Baron von Hügel, of Friedrich Heiler, and of the late Professor Ernst Troeltsch, will be sufficiently evident to all readers of these lectures. To Mr. R. G. Collingwood, Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford, I am indebted for certain thoughts which he will recognise. To my wife for continuous help and criticism, to the Rev. K. E. Kirk, Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and to Mr. C. W. H.

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Sutton, Lecturer of Christ Church, both of whom read the first five lectures at an early stage in manuscript and gave valuable advice, as well as to others who have helped me, I am under a deep sense of obligation. Nor can I close this preface without expressing, on behalf of my wife as well as of myself, our sincere and grateful thanks to the Rev. Dr. Fosbroke, Dean of the General Theological Seminary, and also to Mrs. Fosbroke, for the kind and hospitable manner in which they entertained us during our stay in New York, and to the rest of our American friends for the many kindnesses shown to us in the course of our visit.

I should add that since the reference on p. 101 was written, and indeed after the greater part of the book was already in paged proofs, Miss Lily Dougall, a few months only after the sudden death of her collaborator, has passed beyond the sphere of these earthly controversies. She leaves, at least to her many friends in Oxford, a fragrant memory of kindly and gracious hospitalities, and there are many who will join for her in the Church's immemorial prayer,—*Requiem eternam dona ei, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat ei.*

A. E. J. RAWLINSON.

OXFORD,
January 1924.

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AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM

CHAPTER I

AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM

THE problem of the mutual relations between Authority and Freedom, and of the vital necessity for a synthesis between the two principles, is from some points of view the most urgent of all the problems which confront the Christian theologian of to-day. The recently appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford has justly pointed out in an Inaugural Lecture delivered last June that 'for the vast majority, everywhere and always, religious belief, whether true or false, rests upon authority.' Those who live in a university may easily forget this, but directly they go outside—'and perhaps the journey may prove unnecessary'—they find that 'the most extreme traditionalism and the most extreme modernism are accepted on authority in exactly the same way. That is why a teaching Church is so necessary.'¹ This, of course,

¹ *The Methods of Theology: An Inaugural Lecture delivered in the Chapter House of Christ Church, Oxford, Friday, June 8, 1923.* By the Rev. H. L. Goudge, D.D. (A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd.)

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is primarily merely the assertion of a fact about human nature. The plain man, who is not competent to investigate a given subject-matter at first hand, or who lacks the needed leisure for such investigation, necessarily accepts at second hand such views as he may hold about it on the authority of any teacher whose competence he may respect, and in whose right to speak and in whose general honesty he may have confidence.

The difficulty of the modern situation in regard to religion arises from the misuse of religious authority in the past, which has brought it about that in the eyes of many plain men the authority of orthodox teachers of religion is discredited. Rightly or wrongly, the plain man believes that in the name of orthodoxy much error has been taught, with the result that traditional Christianity is widely discarded. Not infrequently there is combined with this negative attitude towards the religious teaching which claims the authority of the past an astonishing readiness to accept with the most naïve credulity the doctrines of new teachers, however poorly accredited, provided only that they stand definitely apart from such tradition as has hitherto prevailed. Quite clearly, if the Christian Church is to proclaim the Gospel with power in the modern world, not merely to the docile children of orthodoxy but to the multitudes, she needs to recover both the capacity and also the moral right to speak with authority in the name of the living God the authentic message of spiritual truth.

There are really involved here two associated but distinguishable problems which may be sepa-

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rately discussed. There is the problem of the presentation of Christianity to the world. In what sense has the Church the right to claim authority for her Gospel? What are the grounds and what is the nature of such authority? And there is, in the second place, the problem of the proper place and function of authoritative teaching within the Christian Society itself. What is the true function of authority with regard to the handing on of the Christian tradition from generation to generation within the Church? What is the proper attitude of the *Ecclesia docens* in relation to the *Ecclesia discens*? Of these two problems I propose to discuss the second first.

It is obvious that in every sphere of human interest, and in every relationship of human life, the individual is largely moulded by the social tradition which he inherits, and by the spiritual environment into which he is born; and that Authority is the inevitable form under which education and social training invariably begin. The individual must begin by sitting at the feet of the tradition, if he is to enter into any spiritual inheritance which is of value; and this holds good in the sphere of religion, as truly as in the spheres of morality or of human culture generally. It needs to be emphasised, as against some modern hesitations, that Christianity is a definite, historical, and positive religion, which therefore requires to be taught, both in theory and practice. It is not to be expected that the ordinary man should discover or invent Christianity for himself, or should pick it up, without guidance, from the Bible. The

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demand that the Church should give dogmatic and definite religious teaching to such as are able and willing to receive it is a perfectly reasonable demand, and a demand which the Church ought to meet, and to be able to meet with success.

It is important that the teaching thus given should be as far as possible explained, and that it should be put in an intelligible way. It is perhaps more important still that the teaching of dogma should not purvey truth simply as so much theoretical knowledge, but that its bearing should be made clear upon the actual practice of the Christian life. Teaching, for example, with regard to the theory of prayer should go hand-in-hand with suggestion and guidance in the difficult art of actually praying; teaching about the Divinity of Christ with the encouragement of acts of worship addressed to Him as God and of devotion to Him as Lord; teaching about the Holy Ghost with the use of the *Veni Creator* and the inculcation of the deliberate habit of conscious dependence upon the Spirit's power as the only possible basis of Christian living; teaching about the Bible with hints towards its proper devotional use; teaching about the sacraments with instruction, suggestion and help with regard to their practical function and place in the life of a Christian. To give a concrete example, there seems little value in giving theoretical teaching about Holy Communion to children who have never been allowed to be present when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is being observed; but if, on the other hand, they can be familiarised from an early age with Eucharistic practice, by being encouraged both to attend the

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service and to enter (as children quite well can) into the spirit of the worship, and also to witness the communion of their elders, there is every prospect of their own eventual first communions being something more than 'ignorant and uncomfortable acts,' and of a stable communicant habit being built up.

Above all, and as the background and basis of all other religious instruction, there should be clear teaching about the living God as the one great Reality that matters, teaching as to how in the Christian Revelation His nature and being are most fully disclosed, and how all life should be centred and rooted in Him, and directed to Him as 'Our Father.' The essential thing in all such dogmatic instruction should be the maintenance of the principle *lex orandi lex credendi*, or, as it may be stated conversely with equal significance and force, *lex credendi lex orandi*—that is to say, in Christianity prayer and belief are two principles which mutually determine one another. The aim should be to teach not merely religious doctrines but religious practices in such a fashion as to make it appear that the former are essentially the theory and interpretation, as well as the intellectual basis, of the latter. That a merely theoretical grasp of doctrines, however true, is spiritually valueless is suggested already in the New Testament¹; doctrinal beliefs, moreover, which are accepted on the authority of others, and at the same time divorced from the spiritual life and practice which they interpret, are in the nature of things not likely to prove a very permanent possession.

¹ Jas. ii. 19.

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The function of authority in religion, as we have thus far considered it, is that of pastoral teaching and guidance. To this end there is need of trained pastors and teachers—men professionally equipped and ordained to be shepherds of souls. A large part of their ministry, of course, will be concerned with the teaching of those who, whether in years or in intellectual attainment, are, relatively speaking, theological babes. It is a clerical temptation and danger to exaggerate the extent to which this, under modern conditions, is true. The simple believer does actually exist, and it is not religiously essential for simple believers to become theologians, which they are not always well fitted to do. The faith of the simple believer is, doctrinally speaking, a *fides implicita*—that is to say, his theology he receives on authority ; he believes what he is taught to believe. He has not investigated and thought out the matter for himself, and his theology is therefore, however firmly he may hold it, in a sense second-hand. Nevertheless, *non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum*—‘it was not God’s good pleasure to save His people by dialectics’—and it is possible to combine a theology taken over at second-hand on authority with an exceedingly real and vivid and first-hand religion.

The faith of the simple believer, however, is liable to be endangered if questions arise : it is not well fitted to stand the test of intellectual inquiry ; and questions, in the world of to-day, arise almost inevitably. It is a tragedy, therefore, that so many of the clergy are content to cater only for simple believers. The majority of at all clever children,

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and a growing proportion of adults of both sexes, possess questioning minds. Respect for personality demands that their implicit assertion of intellectual maturity and freedom should not be discouraged, but welcomed. They may pass through a stage of inner scepticism or overt denial. They may for the time being abandon, for what seem to themselves to be good reasons, the practice of religion. They are 'thinking for themselves.' But this does not at all mean that they can safely dispense with wise pastoral guidance, or that no intellectual and spiritual help should be given them. On the contrary, they need to be guided and helped, in so far as they are willing to accept help and guidance, towards an understanding of the rational basis of the doctrines and practices which they were taught, at an earlier stage, 'on authority.' They should be authoritatively encouraged by the Church and by its ministers not to stifle their doubts, but to face in all freedom and honesty what may prove for a time to be a painful vocation—the vocation to serve God with their minds. They should also at the same time be encouraged—if they are willing to respond to such encouragement—not to cut themselves off from the sphere of the Christian experience, but to continue in the communion of the Church. They should be encouraged, in despite of intellectual perplexity, to persevere to the full extent to which they find it possible to do so in the practices of religion; in the hope (rationally grounded in the experience of others before them) that if they hold fast, and are intellectually both candid and humble, they will be enabled eventually once more to reach

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stable and positive convictions ; with the advantage, this time, that their religious beliefs will have been thought out and related to their general intellectual outlook as educated persons.

It is mainly in order that he may be fitted thus to serve as a *ductor dubitantium* that it is vitally important that the pastor or priest should be equipped with the best modern knowledge, that he should have an adequate insight into the problems of to-day, and that he should have received a proper training in modern apologetics and theology. From this special point of view it may be a particularly valuable experience to have been through the process of doubt and reconstruction for himself. He is not likely to teach effectively to others a theology which he has himself taken over merely on authority at second-hand, and which he has not adequately thought out ; nor is he likely to have the right kind of sympathy with intellectual perplexity if he has not himself been intellectually perplexed. He should in any case have been trained to recognise that, although creed is ultimately an essential element in Christianity, Christianity as life and practice is more than creed, and that as a tentative first stage along the road of intellectual recovery it is well to recommend what may be described as an agnostic and provisional persistence in Christian practices and Christian life. He should know enough to appreciate the wickedness of attempting to repress inquiry by invoking *at this stage* the official utterances of a Church authority, the credentials or the rational basis of which are precisely the very thing that is ultimately in ques-

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tion ; and if unable to give further help himself he should have the humility and common sense to refer the inquirer to some other and more competent intellectual guide.

Let me sum up the argument as far as it has hitherto gone. Our concern has been with the problem of Authority and Freedom *within* the Christian community in its bearing either upon the religious education of children or upon the pastoral care of adults. I have endeavoured to suggest that the teacher, while claiming for himself neither personal infallibility nor omniscience, is nevertheless called upon to teach with the authority inherent in his function as the exponent of a definite religious tradition. It is a tradition which has been, or which should have been, verified to a certain extent in the personal life and religious experience of the teacher ; a tradition which has been to a much wider extent verified in the corporate experience of the Church in whose name (if he be an accredited minister) the teacher is authorised to speak ; but still a tradition which, in relation to those who for the first time are brought into contact with it, or who are under instruction, is necessarily presented, in the first instance, *ab extra*—that is to say, upon the authority of others. I have endeavoured to make it clear that such a method of authoritative teaching is not merely inevitable, but that it is compatible—provided only that it be accompanied by wisdom—with the fullest possible respect for individual personality and freedom. Authority is the necessary form under which any tradition,

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whether of religion or of civilisation, must be mediated, in the first instance, to individuals, if it is to reach them at all.

There is, nevertheless, a sense in which Authority, as thus far understood, though initially inevitable as a method of teaching, ought continually to be labouring to render itself henceforward unnecessary. 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' 'Now we believe, not because of thy word, but because we have seen for ourselves and know.' The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews rebukes those to whom he writes for their dullness of hearing, complaining of them for needing to be taught over again the first principles of the oracles of God, when by reason of the time they ought themselves to be ready to become teachers of others.¹ Is not this the ideal, that all Christians, having graduated, as it were, in the *Ecclesia discens*, should in due course become competent to take their place in the ranks of the *Ecclesia docens*, and themselves to teach with the authority born of experience and knowledge? Or is the *Ecclesia docens* itself also at the same time an *Ecclesia discens*? Is there any sense in which Christianity continues to be, even for those who are intellectually mature, a religion of Authority?

The answer to this question, I think, is in the affirmative; partly for the reason that Christianity is a positive and historical religion, and cannot be fully understood in independence of its own historical tradition; and partly for the reason that

¹ Heb. v. 11-12.

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religion, as such, can *never* be fully understood. It speaks always in the language of metaphor and symbol ; it apprehends truth ' darkly, as in a mirror.' To rationalise religion by turning it into a philosophy is always to turn it into something other than itself ; and in the process of such rationalisation there is always something lost which is of the vital breath of religion itself, namely, the realisation that *omnia exeunt in mysterium*, and that there is more in religion, and in the Divine Object of religious worship and adoration, than can be in any adequate sense grasped or understood by the mind.

This does not mean that Religion is related to Philosophy simply as incompletely rationalised to fully rationalised experience ; it means rather that Philosophy, in the process of attempting to translate into terms fully understood the truths symbolically apprehended by Religion, drops out part of their meaning. Regarded from the point of view of essential truth, it is arguable that there is a sense in which Religion attains to a deeper, more concrete, more intimately personal apprehension of Reality than that which is attainable by Philosophy : the difference resides in the fact that, whereas Religion sees in a glass darkly, Philosophy cannot accept things unless they are clear. It is the business of Philosophy in relation to Religion, as in relation to any other activity of the spirit, neither to attack nor to defend, but to attempt always to understand it ; but Philosophy cannot serve as a substitute for Religion itself. There is in all genuine religion an element of ultimate agnosticism : a God who was wholly unknown of course could not be worshipped, but

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a God who was completely understood would be no longer a possible object of worship.¹ This is, I think, part of the truth which underlies the striking treatise by Professor Rudolf Otto of Marburg on the religious conception of *Holiness* (as an attribute of Deity), a book the sub-title of which may be translated 'A study of the relation of the non-rational to the rational elements in the conception of the Divine.'²

From all this it follows, not merely that in every theology and in every philosophy of religion there must always be an element of permanent inadequacy, and not merely that religion cannot be understood at all if it is approached in the detached spirit of a Salomon Reinach : it follows also that the intellectual interpretation and study of religion must always be controlled by the 'authority' of religion itself. There is always the danger of theorising upon too narrow a basis of experience : and the intellectual interpretation of the theologian must be controlled by the experience of the saint. The Christian theologian whose work is to be of any value must aim at taking account, not only of the spiritual values inherent in the tradition in which he has personally been brought up, but of the spiritual significance of the whole manifestation of Christianity in history. He must reckon with the spiritual *auctoritas* of every one of the various forms

¹ Cf. H. Rickert, *System der Philosophie*, i. 340 : 'Ein restlos begriffenes Göttliches bliebe also . . . kein Göttliches, sondern verwandelte sich in ein Menschliches.'

² Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige : über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*. (Breslau. 1917.)

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of Christianity, and must ask, with regard to doctrines and practices, not merely what they say, or how they appear when regarded polemically, but what they mean, and what they actually represent in the religious lives of those who practise and accept them. He must continually be attempting to guard against the temptation to premature synthesis, and to overcome the narrowness of his personal experience by reference to the wider experience of others—and to the witness of other forms of Christianity. Inasmuch as there is no man who can claim to have fully understood Christianity, there is a sense in which every man, whether teacher or not, must be permanently a learner. In the Christian tradition as a whole, and in the experience of ecumenical Christendom, greater treasure of spiritual riches and wisdom is contained than any given individual, or any existing 'denomination' of Christians, in isolation is capable of grasping. A Christian man lives unto God in the power of the Spirit on the basis of such positive convictions as he has attained, and of such spiritual practice as he has thus far found real. He does well to avoid a closed mind, and to be willing to learn still from his brethren; neither simply rejecting without qualification, as superstitious, religious doctrines which he does not personally hold, nor condemning, as devoid of spiritual value, or as positively harmful, religious practices of which he has had no personal experience.

What I have just been saying amounts to the suggestion that the Christian theologian, who aims at achieving a synthetic grasp and an intellectual

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interpretation of Christianity as a whole, must take account of the whole, and not merely of a part, of the tradition of Christianity in its historical developments from the first age until now. But what, it may be asked, is precisely the value of tradition? May not traditions be either right or wrong, valuable or the reverse? The question, indeed, may be raised whether tradition in the abstract, the mere fact of a tradition as such, apart from its content in relation to that which is otherwise known of the world, is entitled to carry any weight or to be regarded as having any value at all. The traditionalist no doubt starts with a bias in favour of tradition, the self-conscious modernist starts with a bias against it. The plain man of to-day, in his aloofness from historical Christianity, is anti-traditional: the orthodox minority, who practise religion, on the whole are traditionally-minded. But has either of these attitudes the least claim to be called scientific?

The answer of course is that tradition requires to be continually criticised and sifted, perpetually reinterpreted in relation to our knowledge of the world as a whole: and that is precisely, in respect of religious tradition, the work of the Christian theologian. In so far as he starts with a bias, his bias arises solely from the fact that he is a Christian, and therefore believes that there must be such a thing as a true Christian theology. The fact that Christianity persists in the world, that it has survived both the attacks of its enemies and the apologies of its friends, is to him an evidence of its spiritual vitality and power. He refuses to

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believe that the faiths by which men live, and by which, through many generations, men have been enabled to live spiritually, are wholly illusory ; he recognises that the intellectual statements of them require to be tested afresh and re-synthesised in every generation. It does not follow that the new theologies will prove to be radically new : and in so far as they do not, they will have the effect of confirming the tradition, which thereby ceases to be *merely* tradition, and becomes tested and verified tradition. The authority of a religious tradition which is continually being tested and vindicated afresh, both in spiritual life and in thought, becomes proportionately high. The *consensus fidelium*, testifying to the spiritual value and truth of Christianity, *in proportion as it is a genuine consensus at once of theological thinkers and of saints*, has a rational claim to be the kind of *auctoritas* of which, in matters of religion, the plain man *ought* to be willing to take account.

Its authority is proportionally weakened in so far as a genuine consensus, at once of theologians and of saints, is not really forthcoming. It has become a commonplace to say that the presumptive authority of the Christian tradition as a whole has been enormously weakened in the eyes of the plain man by the existing disagreements among Christians. A reunion of Christendom, accompanied by and based upon a new critical and theological synthesis which should restate Christianity on its theoretical and doctrinal side in such a fashion as to take real and adequate account not only of ' modern knowledge ' but also of *all* the positive elements of spiritual

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truth and value one-sidedly maintained by the conflicting traditions of the various sects and 'churches'—a consummation of this kind, if by the grace of God it should ever be achieved, would no doubt enormously enhance the *de facto* authority of what would then be the Christian consensus.

It is important, however, to recognise, in all arguing from the authority of tradition, or from consensus, that heads need to be weighed as well as to be counted. The consensus which carries real weight is a free consensus, whether in doctrine or in practice. The consensus which carries a true presumptive authority in matters of theological thought is a free consensus of competent and Christian theologians, thinking freely about the meaning of their religion. Unanimity or consensus, in so far as it lays itself open to the suspicion of being secured only by methods of discipline, ceases *ipso facto* to be impressive. The unanimous orthodoxy of a Church which throughout the world speaks everywhere with a single voice, in proportion as unanimity is secured by the simple expedient of excommunicating dissentients, is deprived of the overwhelming authority which it might otherwise possess.

Of course, no conceivable system of discipline can absolutely crush free thought ; but it is important at least to recognise that intellectual authority can only attach to the results of thinking which is free. The impressive unanimity of the theological thinking of the Church of Rome, in view of the subordination of all Roman theologians to the disciplinary *magisterium* of the Pope, is rendered liable to be discounted by the taunt that the many are only

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unanimous for the reason that they are repeating the sentiments of the one. It occasionally happens that other ecclesiastical communions, besides that of Rome, need to be reminded that the amount of real authority attaching to a theological consensus varies inversely with the extent to which it is safeguarded artificially by discipline. *Real authority requires real freedom as the only environment in which it can live.*

And the risks of freedom have to be taken : they mean that heresies arise and have to be met by reasoned argument and not by summary excommunication : that the truth has to be trusted to prevail on its merits in the free forum of open discussion, and as tested by its applicability to life. In other words, *the free handling of tradition, and the continuously critical attempt to test and sift its value, are essential if Christian tradition as such is to carry any real authority at all.* It is a process in which mistakes will from time to time inevitably be made—to be corrected in no other way than by the subsequent work of other labourers in the same field. There is a constructive criticism which interprets positively the true meaning of the past, and which labours to bring out the underlying positive values inherent in tradition, in the confidence that nothing that is of genuine truth and value can be permanently lost, and that nothing short of the whole truth can suffice. Complete critical freedom is, nevertheless, essential to true authority, inasmuch as it is only in proportion as free and healthy criticism is continuously brought to bear upon tradition that opposition can be prevented

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from arising between tradition—which so largely forms the raw material of theology—and truth.

It is hardly too much to say that in this matter the Christian Church must establish a new tradition of intellectual honesty and of veracity before she can hope once more to command the confidence of the modern world in her capacity as a teacher of spiritual and religious truth. The present age is, by general admission, an age of intellectual unrest and religious confusion. There is a sense, indeed, in which it may be said that the so-called 'conflict between religion and science' by which the last generation was exercised is a thing of the past. It is now perceived to have been in part a drawn battle, in part the result of a mutual misunderstanding. Of far greater importance in its bearing upon Christian theology than any such skirmish between outposts is the modern world-outlook as a whole, with its predominantly historical interest. Apart altogether from modern movements in philosophy and psychology, it has been obvious for a generation or more that in the light of the new sciences of historical criticism and comparative religion the whole basis of inherited orthodoxy requires to be rethought and restated. Some little has already been accomplished, and a number of false starts have been made; but, speaking broadly, the work remains still to be done. It will not be accomplished in one generation, and in the meantime much patience with theological mistakes will be required. Two prophecies may safely be made: on the one hand, the spiritual validity of Christianity as a religion, as a way of life and as a system

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of practice, will not be affected by any such intellectual restatement of traditional theology as may be eventually attained: on the other, in any adequate restatement the *whole* of the spiritual tradition of Christianity (and indeed, in the long run, of religious humanity everywhere) must be taken into eventual account.

It will be remembered that at an earlier stage of this chapter I distinguished two problems, of which the first was the problem of the presentation of Christianity to the world. In what sense (it was asked) has the Church the right to claim authority for her Gospel? What are the grounds and what is the nature of such authority? I can imagine that in the course of the intervening discussion, which has been concerned with the second of our two problems—the problem of authority in relation to tradition as it affects the theologian, the problem of the proper place and function of authoritative teaching within the Church as it affects the plain man—the question may have arisen in the minds of my readers, What becomes, in all this, of the Divine authority of Christianity as a revelation from God? The whole subject of Revelation, and of the relation of the revelation of God in Christ Jesus to other real or alleged revelations of God, forms the theme of a subsequent chapter.¹ I would only remark here that there is *one* conception of revelation which I think must be repudiated, that, namely, which assigns to it what may be called an *oracular* authority, and regards it as taking the form of the miraculous

¹ See chapter v.

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communication from heaven of *information*, infallibly guaranteed, about matters of history, or of theological truth, ready-made, and expressed in precise theological form.

Provided that this caution be remembered, then I think it is true that Christianity claims, and that it always must claim, to be a Divine Revelation from God. That has been from the beginning its characteristic, at once the nerve of its missionary impulse and the secret of its power. It claims to speak with the accents, not of human discovery, but of direct revelation from God, proclaiming to men an authoritative message, whether they are willing to hear and give heed to its Gospel, or whether they forbear. The truth, indeed, of a claim of this kind, as I believe, can never be intellectually demonstrated: it can neither be proved nor disproved: it makes its appeal to the spiritual discernment of men, to the heart and the conscience; it is rather a psychological than a logical appeal; it remains always a claim, which respects spiritual freedom, and which invites, but can never compel, the assent of mankind. The claim, nevertheless, as I have said, is one which I think Christianity must necessarily make. Christianity claims to be either the decisive, sufficient, authoritative and final word or message of God to us men, or to be nothing at all. It claims that its message is with manifestation of the Spirit and with power.

There can be no question but that this has been the characteristic of Christianity from the beginning. It is seen in the authority of Christ. 'He taught with authority, and not as the scribes.' He claimed

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an *ἐξουσία* which was limitless—in teaching and healing, in dealing with sin and with sinners, and in relation to Law and tradition. He spoke like the prophets on the authority of immediate inspiration. He is represented as having claimed that He came forth from God: as the Anointed of the Spirit He is represented as having claimed that all *ἐξουσία* was committed to Him in heaven and on earth, and as having commanded His disciples to proclaim good news of God in His name to the whole world, and to make disciples of all nations in the confidence of His spiritual Presence in their midst unto the end of the Age. For the purposes of my argument it does not matter whether these sayings are literally authentic or not. They are evidence of the consciousness of early Christianity, and of the conviction in which its apostles went out into the world. ‘As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you . . . Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.’

It is impossible, I think, to exaggerate this consciousness, as of an absolute spiritual authority to speak and to act in the name of Christ and of God and in the power of the Spirit, by which the first representatives of Christianity were plainly inspired. It is seen most markedly in the decisive words of the apostolic letter ascribed in the Acts to the Christian Church in Jerusalem—‘It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us’—but it is everywhere apparent; and it is this same confident assurance of an absolute message, which comes to mankind with the authority of the living God

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Himself, which has at all times proved the secret of the converting and compelling power of the Christian Gospel, wherever it has been genuinely proclaimed with spiritual conviction and with spiritual effect.* The Gospel has ever been proclaimed, not as a method of seeking the truth, but as the authentic message and utterance of Truth itself. It has claimed for itself the authority of God.

The world into which Christianity first came—the Mediterranean world of the first century A.D.—was like the civilised world of our own generation in being a world of much spiritual seeking. Old landmarks were disturbed, old religions and philosophies discredited: men groped after God in the darkness, feeling after the living God if haply He might be found. It was widely held that the supreme God was unknowable, that the affairs of men and of the visible universe were either at the mercy of Chance or controlled by Necessity: the minds of the majority of men were divided between superstitious fears and hopes equally superstitious, precisely as are the minds of large numbers of men under differing forms to-day. There were even those who believed that the universe was controlled by malignant forces, from whose remorseless and cruel grip there was for the mass of mankind no escape. Everywhere was profound scepticism, deep spiritual uncertainty, and consciousness of spiritual need, linked (as it must be admitted) with an eager readiness in many quarters to lend a credulous ear to the claims of any real or supposed revelation which could boast of antiquity, and which emanated from the immemorial East. It was made a reproach

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against the preachers of the Gospel that the story of Jesus who was called Christus was of such recent origin, and came from a country so well known and from the midst of a nation so cordially disliked as was that of the Jews.

If the new message, nevertheless, made headway with astonishing rapidity, it was not on the ground of any particular wisdom or skill on the part of its apologists. The triumph of the Gospel was due to the fact that it was proclaimed as the message of God, that it spoke with the accents of spiritual certainty to a world which was spiritually confused. Into a world of seekers there came suddenly, in the persons of the first preachers of the Gospel, those who claimed to have found. Others discussed and argued: these men proclaimed simply 'We have seen and we *know*. Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare we unto you. This is the message that we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. This is the genuine God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols'—that is, 'from every kind of sham.' And the Gospel, thus simply proclaimed, operated as a convincing and liberating message of spiritual freedom and power, delivering men from spiritual bondage and from spiritual bewilderment and fear, precisely for the reason that it claimed, without any hesitation, the right to speak directly to their souls with immediate certitude, in the Name and by the authority of the living God Himself. It was a message at once of authority and of freedom.

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It appears to me that the note of authority, in the sense just described—that is to say, the capacity to proclaim with the inner certitude of prophetic conviction the authoritative message of Divine Revelation to all mankind—the Christian Church can never lose without becoming untrue to her own innermost being. Like her Lord, the Church speaks, and must speak, with the inherent consciousness of inspiration and of authority, a message of revelation from on high. The Church must claim to be apostolic, as well as one, and universal, and holy; apostolic, not merely in the sense of being missionary, but in the sense of being divinely commissioned, divinely ‘sent.’ She speaks to mankind in the name of Revelation: she speaks as one sent from God. For even so spake her Lord—the Lord who, in the ‘spiritual Gospel’ which most profoundly interprets the essential meaning of Christianity, is represented as saying to His disciples, ‘As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.’

Nevertheless, the ‘testimony of Jesus’ is essentially the ‘spirit of prophecy’: the authority of the Church as the bearer of revelation, like that of the Church’s Lord, is primarily prophetic, rather than legal or dictatorial, in type. It is possible to combine the fullest recognition of the prophetic authority of the Church’s Gospel with the further recognition of the necessity of trying to understand it; of thinking it out afresh, from a theological point of view, in every successive generation. The authority of the Church’s message extends primarily to its spiritual content, and only secondarily to the intellectual forms in which it is from time to time expressed. The Church’s authority is essentially the

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authority, not of the letter, but of the eternal Spirit of all truth. It has been hardened into the ecclesiastical doctrine of an intellectual finality in the formulation of dogma ; but this is the result of a false legalisation of spiritual authority. The Church formulates dogma in terms of the current intellectual outlook of the period in which the dogma is formulated ; she has not the right to claim absolute intellectual finality for any formula or formulation. What she has the right to claim on behalf of such dogma as is genuinely endorsed by the mind of the Spirit is not intellectual adequacy or stereotyped finality, but spiritual truth. What can rightly be claimed, for example, in respect of the formulation of dogma in the Age of the Councils is in no case intellectual infallibility or intellectual finality or adequacy, but sureness of insight into the spiritual issues at stake, rightness of choice as between the alternatives actually presented. The Church, as I have elsewhere expressed it, may canonise, but she may not stereotype. She may not so utilise the thinking of the past as to preclude, or to render unnecessary, the thinking of the present.¹

The Christian Church and the Christian religion must nevertheless claim for themselves, as we have already seen, a Divine authority, by reason of the inherent character and consciousness of Christianity as a religion of revelation ; nay, rather as *the* Religion of Revelation, the one final and sufficient Divine Revelation for the world. What I have tried to suggest in this chapter is that a true Authority must be compatible with Freedom. ‘ Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’

¹ See Additional Note, p. 188.

CHAPTER II

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THE civilisation of mediaeval Europe has been described by the late Professor Troeltsch as a Church-civilisation, a civilisation of authority. The civilisation of to-day is predominantly secular. The modern world—the world as we know it—is the ultimate product of the two great movements known respectively as the Reformation and the Renaissance. The fruits of the Renaissance were humanism and secular science. The fruit of the Reformation—not at first, but eventually—has been freedom from the coercive conception of authority in matters of religion. Humanism and science and freedom are—all three—things emphatically good. But they have hitherto involved, more and more, the progressive secularisation of life. And to-day, in the mass of the people, the spiritual instincts are starved. Let me quote a paragraph from a recently published work by Miss Evelyn Underhill, *The Life of the Spirit and the Life of To-day*.

Whatever the religion or philosophy we profess may be [writes Miss Underhill], it remains for us in the realm of idea, not in the realm of fact. In practice,

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we do not aim at the achievement of a spiritual type of consciousness as the crown of human culture. The best that most education does for our children is only what the devil did for Christ. It takes them up to the top of a high mountain and shows them all the kingdoms of this world ; the kingdom of history, the kingdom of letters, the kingdom of beauty, the kingdom of science. It is a splendid vision, but unfortunately fugitive; and since the spirit is not fugitive, it demands an objective that is permanent. If we do not give it such an objective, one of two things must happen to it. Either it will be restless and dissatisfied, and throw the whole life out of key ; or it will become dormant for lack of use, and so the whole life will be impoverished, its best promise unfulfilled. One line leads to the neurotic, the other to the average sensual man, and I think it will be agreed that modern life produces a good crop of both these kinds of defectives.¹

It should, moreover, be obvious that the need of to-day is not merely the need of a religion capable of unifying the life of the individual in the realm of the spirit upon a basis of abiding satisfactions. There is need of a Catholic religion, capable of unifying human life universally, upon the basis of a supernational and supernatural community, a Catholic Church. For lack of such a principle of spiritual unity, transcending the lesser loyalties of class and race and nation, and supernaturalising life, the civilisation of the modern world is visibly perishing before our eyes. Is such a principle of spiritual unification in any way possible upon the basis of freedom ?

It was remarked to me recently in conversation by a philosophical friend that, looking at

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 184-5.

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the matter from his own particular standpoint, he regarded religion as being a high and indispensable form of human experience. He added that, in his judgment, the highest form of religion was Catholicism. The revolt, he maintained, of the sixteenth-century Reformers against the Catholic Church, and the antagonism towards Catholicism of their spiritual descendants, had been only superficially and to a limited extent a legitimate protest against abuses and corruptions. Fundamentally, it had been a repudiation of ideas and institutions and practices which were integral to religion itself, and it was no accident that Protestantism had led, in the countries where it had prevailed, to the progressive secularisation of human life. To-day in distinctively Protestant countries religion was represented either by a dying Puritanism or by a sporadic pietism, galvanised by periodical 'revivals.' 'The modern world,' remarked my friend, 'in so far as it is Protestant, is essentially pagan, and the triumph of Protestantism is a thing which cannot be desired by any far-seeing man. For paganism, holding that it does not matter what a man believes—that is, that his beliefs can be separated from his moral and political life—is necessarily tolerant, fissiparous, generative of an infinity of churchlets, or rather conventicles, each of which is the living negation of the very idea of a Church, as their mutual toleration is the negation of a firm and passionate faith.'

On the other hand Roman Catholic countries, in so far as the Church was or had been dominant in them, were deficient in freedom: and the triumph

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of Romanism was equally a thing which could not be desired by any far-seeing man. The choice in such countries lay commonly between two tyrannies—a tyranny of the Blacks or alternatively a tyranny of the Reds. For his own part he preferred the largely pagan liberty of England to the tyranny of either clericalist or anti-clericalist governments on the continent of Europe. Was Catholicism in any form capable of being genuinely combined with freedom? My friend was disposed to doubt it. Certainly the combination had never effectively existed hitherto: and in a country genuinely free and genuinely democratic he was disposed to think that Catholicism could never be more than the exotic religion of a minority, the luxury of a few. It appears to me that my friend's diagnosis was largely right, and that the vital question for the future is the question with which our conversation ended.

Meanwhile it is worth observing that the Middle Ages, whatever their defects, did provide a first sketch or adumbration of what a Christian world-civilisation might be. In temporary and partial fashion, and on a basis, as it must be admitted, rather of compromise than of genuine synthesis between such opposing principles as those of Church and Empire, of Freedom and Authority, there was actually achieved and built up for a time, at least for all the peoples comprised within the general unity of Western Christendom, a civilisation spiritually unified upon the religious basis of supernatural and supernatural loyalty to Christ and to His Church. The Middle Ages were not only the so-

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called ages of faith ; they were not only the ages in which the human mind in its best developments was at one with itself, in which art and science and religion were cultivated by the same people, or at least by people working hand in hand with one another and co-operating to common ends ; they constituted also a period of human history in which more than lip-service was done to the idea of the Divine Sovereignty in the affairs both of men and of nations. The law of Nature of the Stoics, identified by the Church with the revealed law of God, and becoming the basis of the mediaeval Canon Law, did really operate as a principle of recognised justice among men. In the words of a recent writer,

it supplied a court of appeal over princes. In wild times it imposed an effective restraint on the force on which positive law must rely, proclaiming the moral grounds of all law, and delivering the poor from him that was too strong for him by insistence on indestructible human rights. It controlled the idea of the alleged 'rights of property' by continual reference to human need. It even managed to 'refrain the spirit of princes,' mitigating the claims of all sectional interests by the higher claim of that moral unity in which alone human life had real significance. It stood supreme over international rivalry. In other words, it confronted a turbulent world with a constant and effective challenge in the name of the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit.¹

It is not surprising that there are those to-day who look back to the civilisation of the Middle Ages with longing eyes ; and it is easy, though in part fallacious, to idealise certain aspects of mediaeval

¹ F. R. Barry, *S. Paul and Social Psychology*, p. 119.

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social life. But there are in history neither accidents nor regressions ; and the romanticism which merely idealises the past, and indulges in vain regrets for a vanished epoch the glamour of which is not impossibly due in part to the enchantment lent by distance, can never have any living message for to-day. The mediaeval compromise broke down ; the mediaeval unity fell to pieces. That it should have done so was really inevitable : the elements of potential disruption were already there, the unity was relatively superficial. In so far as it was real, it was comparable to a stratification in some process of geological formation, which proved itself unable to resist the impact of new forces or to survive the conditions of a new age. In the disruption of mediaevalism was involved the disruption of mediaeval Christianity.

There is an obvious sense in which, in a more complete degree than are any of the other post-Reformation developments of the Christian religion, the Roman Catholic Church, as having experienced neither the advantages nor the disadvantages of a reformation as commonly understood, is the residuary legatee of mediaeval Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church of to-day is none the less herself also to be reckoned among post-Reformation developments, as being a product of the Counter-Reformation. The Catholicism of Roman Catholic countries after the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation was something essentially narrower than the religion of the mediaeval Church. The difference is the difference between the spirit of a S. Augustine, a S. Thomas Aquinas, or a

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S. Francis of Assisi, and the narrow legalism and fanatical Papalism of an Ignatius Loyola, or the morbid scrupulosity and sentimentally exaggerated Mariolatry of an Alfonso da Liguori. Friedrich Heiler, to whose great work on Catholicism I am indebted for these examples, remarks with reference to the Papal Decree by which, in 1871, Pope Pius IX elevated S. Alphonsus to the status of a Doctor of the Church, thereby ranking him on a level with S. Augustine and S. Thomas, that 'no one can contemplate the significance of this transaction without being dismayed in the very depths of his soul at the frightful decadence of Roman Catholicism therein expressed.'¹ In a word, the Catholicism of the Roman Church since the Reformation has been a narrowed Catholicism, a Catholicism on the defensive, the expression of a religion driven in upon itself; a counter-Protestantism, specialising in Catholic piety to the prejudice of other and complementary interests of the human spirit, and occasionally even to the prejudice of moral values. 'In my country,' remarked an Italian Modernist leader to me in conversation some years ago, 'we have many religious people who are not moral. In your country you have many moral people who are not religious. Both types of people are defective.'

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to understand the attractiveness of the Roman Catholic Church to many religious souls to-day. Baron von Hügel,

¹ 'Niemand kann sich die Bedeutung dieser Tatsache vergegenwärtigen, ohne in tiefster Seele erschüttert zu werden von der furchtbaren Dekadenz des römischen Katholizismus, die sich darin äussert.' (F. Heiler, *Der Katholizismus, seine Idee und seine Erscheinung*, p. 155. München, 1923.)

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himself a Roman Catholic layman, is credited with the remark that at its best the religion of the Roman Church is the best religion in the world. *Corruptio optimi pessima* : the Baron is said to have added that at its worst it is capable of degenerating into something very like the worst religious system in the world. Religious systems, however, if they are to be justly estimated, ought not to be taken at their worst ; and considered upon its purely religious side, the Church of Rome at its best is certainly extraordinarily good. Any reasonable discussion of it ought to begin by appreciating its strength. A continuous and age-long tradition of any kind is psychologically always singularly impressive ; and there is a truth expressed in the proud boast *semper eadem*, even though the boast in question be only relatively true. World-wide in scope, genuinely international in character, uniting the loyalty of many races and many tongues, the Roman Church is recognised even by its enemies as a formidable reality, a spiritual force with which both individuals and governments must reckon, and possesses the distinction which made so profound an impression upon the mind of Newman—the distinction of being hated by the world. To these grounds of appeal must be added the witness borne by the devoted service and passionate loyalty of its multitudes of faithful, the spiritual beauty of saintly lives nurtured by its discipline and sacraments, and the strength that belongs, and will always belong, to a body that knows its own mind, and which speaks, in essentials, and apart from minor varieties of standpoint, with a single united voice.

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'The ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned upon the grave thereof' it has been called; but the ghost of the Roman Empire, baptised into Christ, and surviving, intensely alive and real, after nineteen centuries, is, from whatever point of view it may be regarded, a phenomenon of singular impressiveness.

The Church of Rome, moreover, has succeeded at all times, in a sense and upon a scale in which no form of Protestantism has (hitherto, at any rate) succeeded, in being at one and the same time the home of sinners and the school of saints. It has been, and still is, in the countries where it prevails, the vehicle of a genuine folk-religion—a religion of the people, sucked in, as a system of belief and practice, virtually from the cradle by each child with its mother's milk. It has given teaching—clear, definite, effective—which has gripped and held the allegiance of large multitudes of people, and has trained them in the practice of the spiritual life. It has borne constant and unvarying witness to the central truths of the Christian Gospel, and has maintained amongst its adherents, wherever it has existed, a vivid consciousness of the reality of the supernatural and the unseen. Popular superstitions, such as are found in all countries in which there is a continuous tradition of customs and usages going back ultimately behind Christianity into a pagan past, the Roman Church has been content to tolerate in practice and to christianise, as far as possible, in theory—in some cases, it must be admitted, with only indifferent success. The attitude of many a simple-minded Roman Catholic towards holy

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objects and relics, miraculous images and saints, is as naively superstitious as is that of many a simple-minded Protestant towards the Bible. The actual amount of spiritual harm which results from such acquiescence in superstition it is difficult to estimate ; certainly it is as easy to exaggerate as to ignore it, and the toleration of such things in the periphery of popular piety does not deeply affect the spiritual core of the Roman religion. In this matter there is naturally considerable variation in accordance with differences of national temperament and local tradition, and also in accordance with the varying level of average education in different countries.

Probably for the very reason that she has not striven sedulously and at all costs to uproot superstition, the Roman Church everywhere has succeeded in teaching ordinary people to worship God with entire devotion, complete simplicity, and absence of self-consciousness, and has thereby naturalised religion in the common life of man. The dramatic cycle of the Christian year, with its varying sequence of festivals and seasons, not only affords the necessary variety in worship, but is also of enormous teaching value as driving home into the consciousness of the people the various doctrines of the Christian faith and the leading events of the Christian story. The Roman Mass, despite its liturgical defects,¹ is from some points

¹ From a liturgical point of view the chief defects of the Roman Mass are (*a*) the absence of any invocation of the Holy Spirit, the consequence of which is that the consecration of the elements tends to be thought of as being effected by the recitation of the ' words of institution,' operating as a kind of charm—a defect which is inherent also in an even more

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of view the most potent instrument of cultus possessed by the Christian world. The dramatic symbolism of the liturgical acts of the celebrant, the archaistic use of the Latin tongue, the still murmur of the consecratory prayer, the æsthetic appeal of the ceremonial, the atmosphere of devotion and sense of mystery which normally characterise the service, all contribute to suggest powerfully the approach of an awe-struck and worshipping people to the ultimate mystery of the Divine Holiness—in Rudolf Otto's terminology, to God as *Numinosum*, *Fascinatum*, *Mysterium tremendum*.¹

Once more, it is impossible not to be impressed by the elasticity of the Church of Rome, by its practical wisdom, its adaptability to circumstance, its clear discrimination of what it regards as essential from what is ultimately unessential, its astonishing efficiency, and what I am tempted to call its common sense. Its clergy for the most part live in the world of real life, and have an understanding of ordinary human nature, its temptations, its problems, its contemporary universe of ideas. A professional priesthood whose functions are taken seriously and taken for granted is not infrequently able to be more effectively in touch with life than are the members of a ministry whose specific differentia and *raison d'être* are less clearly defined, but who on the ground of their training and manner of life are nevertheless felt to be in some sense different from ordinary

exaggerated form in the English Prayer Book liturgy of 1662 ; and (b) the various reduplications and repetitions which have resulted from the unskilful conflation of the ancient Roman and Gallican rites.

¹ Otto, *Das Heilige*, *passim*. Cf. Heiler, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

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men. Nor can anyone who is seriously conversant with the world of modern theological scholarship and learning speak in any terms but those of the highest respect of the achievements of Roman Catholic writers in these fields. It is only necessary to think of men like Lebreton and Lagrange, of Batiffol and Cabrol and Delahaye, of the late Mgr. Duchesne and of a number of other writers—French or German for the most part—who are loyal members in their respective countries of the Roman Catholic Church.

But the Roman Church, with all its merits, is not and cannot be, on any considerable scale or in any effective sense, the chosen home of intellectual or spiritual or moral freedom. Its Catholicism, as I have already remarked, is a narrowed Catholicism, which means that it is not Catholic enough. It is too rigid in discipline, too rooted in an unreformed tradition, too hampered by its past; and it is committed to infallibility. Individuals, despairing of the modern religious situation and in search of an infallible guarantee of religious truth, will continue to go to Rome and will there find peace; and Rome, therefore, will continue to make converts. The Vatican, moreover, as being—apart from the League of Nations—the one effectively international institution which as yet exists in the modern world, will continue to grow politically more powerful. But there will be no landslide towards Rome; and no genuinely reunited Christendom is even thinkable upon any basis which does not involve a radical modification of the present claims of the Church of Rome.

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For the fact is that the fundamental claim upon which is based the distinctive theological position of the Church of Rome is one which does not happen to be true. No candid student of history who is not hampered by ecclesiastical considerations can easily bring himself to believe that the Roman Popes in early days enjoyed or exercised any such functions of *de jure* primacy as in the Middle Ages they came to possess in Western Christendom, or as they have exercised since the Reformation in the post-Tridentine Church of Rome. The process by which, for a variety of reasons, the Papacy came to be developed in the Western half of the Church in Europe was indeed as natural and inevitable as it was certainly gradual. The prestige of the Roman city attached also to the Roman see. The City of the Seven Hills, mistress and teacher of the world, was the civiliser of the northern barbarians, and to her they were indebted not for their civilisation only, but in large measure also for their religion. The East may have looked to Alexandria or to Constantinople, may have venerated Jerusalem or Antioch; the West could look only towards Rome. Capital of the Western Empire, she became capital also of the Western Church. The solitary see of apostolic foundation and dignity which the Latin-speaking world could boast, rich in martyrs and saints, traditionally the Bishopric of S. Peter, possessor of the relics of S. Peter and S. Paul, it is not surprising that Rome stood out in solitary eminence wherever Christendom spoke Latin, or was or had been dependent upon the Latin-speaking world. That the Forged Decretals or the alleged

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Donation of Constantine played any really decisive part in the process I venture to doubt. They were rather the symptoms than the causes of the growing pre-eminence of Rome. An exegesis, rather plausible than true, of certain texts in the New Testament may have helped, but the real foundations of papal theory are not Biblical. The roots of the Papacy as an historical phenomenon are in the city of Rome itself, going back, in a certain sense, to the mythical Romulus and Remus. The work of such great outstanding figures as those of Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, Gregory VII (Hildebrand), and Innocent III no doubt consolidated the position, just as the sins of the Borgias and other scandals of the Renaissance period undermined it, and paved the way for the Teutonic revolt, of which the Reformation was the ambiguous fruit. It was an advantage that during the great doctrinal disputes of the fourth and fifth centuries the Roman bishops had on the whole been on the side of eventual orthodoxy. Pope Liberius, as it is thought by many scholars, may have signed under pressure an Arian creed, and Pope Honorius may have been anathematised as a monothelite; but these lapses may either be denied, or explained away without prejudice to the official orthodoxy of the Roman see. The modern Roman claim of continuous orthodoxy, although here and there the historical ice may be somewhat thin, is in general a just one. What is hardly intelligible to any clear-sighted student of history is the failure to recognise the Papacy as having been the result of a development, and that a development which,

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however inevitable and natural and (as it may be added) in a true sense providential,¹ was limited to the West. To read back full-blown the institution of the modern Papacy into its beginnings, to crown S. Peter with the triple tiara of his successors, is in the light of historical science an impossible feat. The S. Peter of history was in no sense a Bishop of Bishops or personal Vicar of Christ : it is only in virtue of an historical anachronism that he can be said to have been ' Bishop of Rome,' though it need not be doubted that he visited the city and was martyred there, as tradition asserts. It is important, moreover, to observe that the supremacy of Rome does not seem to have been at any time effective except in the West.

What all this means is that the Roman position cannot really be historically defended : it can only be historically understood. The great modern Roman Catholic scholars and historical critics, some of whose names have already been mentioned, convey the impression, in spite of their splendid equipment of knowledge and their genuine candour as well as acuteness of mind, that at certain points they are defending a case, that they are writing with one eye upon the *Index expurgatorius*, that at most they are just barely succeeding in not having their writings condemned. The truth is that a really tenable historical apologetic on behalf of the Church of Rome could take only such a form as Roman authority must necessarily repudiate. For

¹ On the great services rendered to Christendom by the Papacy in its golden age, of which the thirteenth century may be regarded as the culmination, see A. L. Smith, *Church and State in the Middle Ages*.

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such an apologetic must be of necessity a form of 'modernism,' at least in the sense that it must involve the acceptance of a doctrine of development ; and doctrines which assert development, in anything more than a purely logical sense, are, since Pius X's encyclical *Pascendi*, officially condemned.

It must be added that from the point of view of Rome they are rightly and necessarily condemned; for a doctrine which involves the admission of the facts of historical (as distinct from purely logical) development—a doctrine, in short, which in any genuine sense attempts to interpret history historically—is bound to prove a weapon of double edge ; in the measure in which it vindicates the Roman development of Christianity, it vindicates also, by parity of reasoning, non-Roman developments as well ; and thereby it destroys the exclusive claims of the Roman see, the essential keystone of the Roman theological arch. It is impossible on purely historical grounds to rule out the non-Roman developments of Christianity. They exist, and they refuse to disappear. They are too persistent to be ignored, and they are not adequately accounted for as simply anomalous : they cannot be satisfactorily covered by any theory about the uncovenanted mercies of God, or by a distinction between the body and the soul of the Church. They are as much a part of the historical evolution of the Christian idea as is the Church of Rome itself : and judged by the relevant tests of general truth to type and of capacity to manifest the Spirit's fruits, they constitute (however in varying degrees their witness may be defective, distorted, or partial) authentic

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elements in the complex disunity of modern Christendom. The Roman position involves the substitution for the tests I have mentioned of a quite different touchstone of authentic Christianity—that, namely, of institutional legitimacy. It is quite fatal to a test of this particular kind that it should be applied in terms of an institution which in the earliest ages of Christianity did not exist.

The real opposition, however, between the theology of the Church of Rome and the modern world-view in effect goes deeper, and extends to issues more fundamental even than that of the Papacy itself. It is a question not merely of the interpretation of Roman Church history in relation to Christian Church history in general. It is a question of the general historical view of the world, of the relation of Christian Church history to the history of religion in general, and to the history of mankind as a whole. It has been pointed out, quite truly, I think, by the late Professor Troeltsch, that the modern world has developed since the eighteenth century a specific type of civilisation and world-view, as distinct from that of the mediaeval Catholic Church (from which that of the older orthodox Protestantism did not seriously depart) as the mediaeval Catholic civilisation was distinct from that of pagan antiquity; and that one of the most fundamental traits of this newer world-outlook is its development of the historical sense and of the historical outlook upon human affairs. It was characteristic of the Church-civilisation of the Middle Ages that it opposed with simple *naïveté* Christian (and Jewish) history to pagan. The latter was

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wholly, or almost wholly, the region of human error—the very virtues of the pagans were not uncommonly regarded as being only splendid vices (*splendida vitia*)—for in paganism man's life was lived at the level of mere 'nature,' and fallen nature at that. The former was determined in a wholly new way by Revelation, conceived as 'the immediate intrusion into the world of the Divine, with its laws, forces, and ends, exactly definable against the background of purely natural capacity.' Christianity was conceived as a wholly supernatural creation, miraculous from first to last, and the Church as a supernatural institution which, though playing its part upon the historical stage, was not historically developed (save in so far as it had been prepared for and prophetically foreshadowed in the equally miraculous and supernatural history of Israel), but had been miraculously introduced into history *ab extra* by the immediate act of God.

Such a conception of Revelation gave rise inevitably to an ecclesiastical civilisation which was before all things a civilisation of authority in the fullest sense of the words, a civilisation in which the Church claimed to control and regulate (and to a large extent did actually control and regulate) the entire ordering of life and of society, and to co-ordinate the various pursuits and ends and activities of the human spirit. The whole outlook upon the world of the civilisation of the Middle Ages, its dogmatic system, its science, its ethics, its political and social doctrines, its theories of law and economics, its practical activities, are dominated by this point of view. It is this which made

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mediaeval civilisation so static, so relatively unprogressive. The whole ideal of the Middle Ages is simply the bringing of established truths, natural and revealed, into a harmony dominated by the religious ends of life, and regulated both directly and indirectly by sacerdotal authority.¹

It is this supernaturalist world-outlook which in essentials continues to this day to be the world-outlook of the Roman Church. It is this which explains at once the political attitude of Rome, and also the fundamental antagonism between Rome and the spirit of modernism in all its forms. From this point of view the effect of the historical breakdown of the mediaeval compromise was simply to throw Rome into permanent opposition. As art, politics, letters, philosophy, science and even religion have progressively emancipated themselves from ecclesiastical control, Rome has simply resisted. Adjusting herself with astonishing diplomatic skill to her surroundings, she remains still the great reactionary authority, asserting in an intensified form the claim to institutional infallibility, of which the Vatican Decree of 1870 is no more than the belated but logical culmination. The true function of the Christian Church in relation to world-civilisation is ideally to unify and correlate the spiritual interests of human life upon the basis of a common religious inspiration. In principle the claim of Rome is still not merely to inspire and to guide, but to dominate, upon the basis of ecclesiastical control. It is a comparative accident that in condemning the particular form of theological restatement or

¹ Cf. Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress* [E. T.], pp. 12-16.

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'modernism' which was advocated by Loisy and his friends at the beginning of the present century Rome was essentially right; for the position of Loisy, involving the severance of the vital link between dogma and history, was destructive in principle of the Christian idea of historic Incarnation. It is, however, no accident which leads Rome to declare her theology *irreformabilis*, and to oppose herself resolutely to the very idea of a modernism of any kind, merely as such. 'Pius IX,' writes Don Miguel de Unamuno, 'the first Pontiff to be proclaimed infallible, declared that he was irreconcilable with the so-called modern civilisation.¹ And he did right.'

De Unamuno's book, from which I have quoted, is published in an English translation under the title of *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Peoples*. The work of a professor in a Spanish University, it is itself a supremely tragic expression of the internal conflict between reason and faith in the mind of a highly educated layman of the Roman Catholic Church. For de Unamuno the essence of Catholicism, or rather the ground on which he personally values it, resides in its claim to furnish, in the teeth of what appear to him to be the conclusions of the natural reason, a supernatural and sacramental guarantee of immortality, thus satisfying the tragic sense of life, with its imperious demand that the horror of death shall not be final. Fundamentally a sceptic, and at the same time

¹ The thesis: *Romanus Pontifex potest ac debet cum progressu, cum liberalismo et cum recenti civilitate sese reconciliare et componere* was the eightieth and last of the series of 'errors' condemned in the *Syllabus* of 1864.

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passionately religious, de Unamuno revels painfully in paradoxes and unreconciled contradictions in the very spirit of a Tertullian, and significantly writes that 'the real sin—perhaps it is the sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no remission—is the sin of heresy, the sin of thinking for oneself. The saying has been heard before now, here in Spain, that to be a liberal—that is, a heretic—is worse than being an assassin, a thief, or an adulterer. The gravest sin is not to obey the Church, whose infallibility protects us from reason.' I allow myself a further quotation from the same writer's work :

It is perhaps true [he writes], as Herrmann says, that 'as soon as we develop religious thought to its logical conclusions, it enters into conflict with other ideas which belong equally to the life of religion.' And this it is which gives to Catholicism its profound vital dialectic. But at what a cost ?

At the cost, it must needs be said, of doing violence to the mental exigencies of those believers in possession of an adult reason. It demands from them that they shall believe all or nothing, that they shall accept the complete totality of dogma or that they shall forfeit all merit if the least part of it be rejected. And hence the result, as the great Unitarian preacher Channing pointed out, that in France and Spain there are multitudes who have proceeded from rejecting Popery to absolute atheism, because 'the fact is, that false and absurd doctrines, when exposed, have a natural tendency to beget scepticism in those who have received them without reflection. None are so likely to believe too little as those who have begun by believing too much.' Here is, indeed, the terrible danger of believing too much. But no! the terrible danger comes from the other quarter—from seeking to believe with the reason and not with life.

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The Catholic solution of our problem, of our unique problem, the problem of the immortality and eternal salvation of the individual soul, satisfies the will, and therefore satisfies life ; but the attempt to rationalise it by means of dogmatic theology fails to satisfy the reason. And reason has its exigencies as imperious as those of life. It is no use seeking to force ourselves to consider as super-rational what clearly appears to us to be contra-rational, nor is it any good wishing to become coal-heavers when we are not coal-heavers.¹

Doubtless the case of de Unamuno is not altogether typical. The majority of practising members of the Roman Church appear rather to accept in unquestioning docility the religious doctrines which they are taught, to be content to receive on the authority of an infallible Church the religious guidance which their souls require : and the Roman Church by the sharp distinction which it officially draws between the *Ecclesia docens* and the *Ecclesia discens* exalts docility in practice to the first rank among Christian virtues. From this point of view the most penetrating of criticisms upon the system is to be found in the chapter on 'The Grand Inquisitor' in Dostoevsky's book, *The Brothers Karamazov*. The Grand Inquisitor explains to Jesus that the Church has undone His work, corrected it and refounded it upon the basis of miracle, mystery, and authority. For the souls of men were indeed like sheep, and could not endure the terrible gift of freedom which Christ had brought ; and the terrible gift, which had brought them such suffering, at last was lifted from their hearts. And mankind were happy in the leading-strings of

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

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tutelage so long as the Church was successful in keeping them from knowledge and free enquiry. And the clergy alone were unhappy, who guarded the mystery, and bore the responsibility of men's sins. And because the Inquisitor, like Christ Himself, had taken upon him the sins of the world, the Lord Christ kissed him upon the lips. And the kiss glowed in the old man's heart ; but he still adhered to his idea.

Dostoevsky is a Russian Orthodox (or rather, unorthodox) writer, and his criticism represents, like that of all of us who are not members of the Roman Church, the impression made by certain aspects of its life upon observers from without. A just estimate of Roman Catholicism as it truly is is a thing extraordinarily difficult to achieve, and to attempt an estimate of its probable future is still more difficult. It is impossible not to believe that the sense of contrast between the religious ideal of a true Catholicism and the empirical reality of Papal Rome must weigh heavily upon the hearts and consciences of not a few of Rome's spiritual subjects, and it is said that the dream is still cherished by devout souls within the Roman Church itself of the coming at some future date, in accordance with old mediaeval prophecy, of a *Pastor angelicus* who shall incarnate the ideal.

A holy monk of the Franciscan order, it is said, shall one day be elected Pope. Accepting the choice of the Cardinals as God's vocation, he shall ascend the Papal Chair ; but refusing the white garments, the triple tiara, and the Fisherman's ring, refusing equally the homage of the Cardinals and the *sedes*

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gestatoria, he shall at first do penance, clad only in the rough habit of his order, at the tomb of St. Peter for the crying sins of his predecessors in the Papacy. Then, having received at his brethren's hands the episcopal consecration (that so the Divine *charisma* might light upon the vessel of God's choice), full of the Spirit, like S. Peter after Pentecost, the new Pope shows himself to the people—and proclaims to them the Gospel of God's Kingdom, and of His grace and forgiving love towards sinful men, exhorting them to heartfelt repentance and brotherly love. The first Encyclical which he issues to the Catholic world begins with the Pauline saying : *Not that we have dominion over your faith : but we are helpers of your joy.* He speaks of the office which God has committed to him, he speaks of primacy and hierarchy and of succession to S. Peter, but in quite other words than those which his predecessors had used. He appeals not to the texts about S. Peter as the Rock or about the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to Jesus' saying about the primacy of ministering love. He adopts as the programme of his pontificate the glorious Gospel words in which Jesus speaks of the greatness of humility and service ; for motto he chooses the saying of the Master :| *I am in the midst of you as one that serveth.* He summons all Christendom to unity in love to their Lord and Saviour and to the brethren, stretching out reconciling hands to all 'separated brethren' and inviting them to return to the one holy Church, which henceforward will receive them not as a harsh mistress but as a loving Mother. He asks not for

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submission, not for the sacrifice of cherished customs and traditions, not for the destruction either of their altars or of their churches : only he bids them stretch out the hand of brotherhood to those from whom they had been separated on grounds of doctrine. *That they all may be one!*—the whole of Christendom shall be reunited upon the basis of ἀγάπη, of Love, even as once it was united in the earliest days of Christianity.

And the whole world listens to this message from the Pope, a message such as had not been heard for centuries from S. Peter's Chair. But the *Papa angelico* does not merely speak : he also acts. Dismissing the bureaucracy of the Vatican and dissolving a whole series of Congregations, he converts the remainder into organisations of Christian charity. He annuls the Codex Juris Canonici and sets in its place the Book of Books, the sacred Scriptures. He summons the Bishops of all the earth—yes, those also of other Christian Churches—to confer together in council in the Eternal City. And the Council proclaims no new dogma : only the ancient 'dogma' which speaks of πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη—of 'faith that worketh by love.' The Pope solemnly restores again to the assembled episcopate the powers which had been handed over to him by the previous Council of the Vatican ; henceforward, as in the days of old, the bishops shall be true shepherds of the flocks entrusted to their care : the Pope will only as *servus servorum Dei*, as servant and minister of universal Christendom, labour to maintain everywhere the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He launches no

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anathemas against such as can no longer express their Christian faith in the doctrinal formulae of the ancient Church, and seek new forms of theological expression : his voice is raised in warning and monition only against such as for the sake of theological formulae make their brethren into heretics, and interpret orthodoxy to the prejudice of charity.

Moreover the new Pope breaks through the prison of the Vatican and, fearless as Peter, clad in the brown habit of the Poor Man of Assisi, issues out into the world to preach Christ's Gospel and to call men to repentance and to love. Bitter opposition he meets from such as cling still to the old papal and curialist ideas of worldly power : many, indeed, of the former ' Praetorian Guard ' of the Papacy—the Society of Jesus—despite their oath of unreserved allegiance to the Pontifex Romanus, refuse him their loyalty on the ground that he refuses to be *pontifex* and *imperator*, and will only be representative and vicar of One who had not where to lay His head. Nevertheless true Christian hearts everywhere rejoice over this new Pope, and precisely those who for centuries had been the bitterest opponents of the Papal Church become now its most loyal members. Old ' heresies ' and ' schisms ' disappear : Orientals and Anglicans, Lutherans and Calvinists, sectaries and fervent believers in the ' Inner Light '—all yield to the new Pope who comes, not to reign over them, but to be their servant. And they remain what they are : retaining their own customs and forms of worship and the specific *charisma* which is theirs ; only they stand henceforward no longer severed from the *ecclesia universalis*

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but linked with her, so as to be co-sharers in the riches of her spiritual life and grace. The *Papa angelico* sets his seal upon the Church's new unity of Love, in that in every Church and in every community he proclaims God's Word and celebrates the Eucharistic Mystery. He utters the great Eucharistic prayer, the *Vere dignum et iustum est*, from the Cathedral altars of the West ; he proclaims the Eucharistic invitation, τὰ ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις, from the βασιλικὴ θύρα of the Oriental Iconostasis ; he breaks the Eucharistic Bread at the unadorned tables of evangelical Puritanism ; he extends the Eucharistic Chalice from the altars of evangelical ' High Churches.' Everywhere it is the same Christ whose atoning Death he is proclaiming, and the mystical communion of whose Life he mediates to the brethren. With S. Paul he can say, ' I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some ' ; and through him the Lord's prophecy has become realised : ' There shall be one fold, and one shepherd.' The boldest dreams of the mediaeval Papacy have been realised, the claim *porro subesse Romano pontifici* has won for itself the recognition of all Christendom—but in a quite other sense and by quite other means than those which had been contemplated by the papal Priest-Kings of the Middle Ages. The *Papa angelico* has become the first among all the disciples of Jesus Christ in virtue of no other primacy than that of sacrificial and ministerial love. Not by self-assertive insistence upon the authority of Christ, and not by the assumption of spiritual or temporal power, but solely in virtue of humility and utter discipleship to Christ,

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he has won for himself such plenitude of power as none of the theocratic popes of old had ever possessed. In him the saying of Jesus has become literally fulfilled: *He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.*¹

The sceptic will regard it as inconceivable that so great a change should ever come over the spirit of the papal dream. The man of faith will remind himself that all things are possible with God. Meanwhile it is clear that in Roman Catholic countries, as much as in Protestant, the mediaeval unity has fallen apart: that in Roman Catholic countries the cleavage between the religious interest and the other interests of the human spirit is just as real and deep as it is elsewhere; that what Rome offers—not the Rome of the *Papa angelico*, but the actual Rome of to-day—is in fact no solution of the problem of divided spiritual interests, but is rather an intensification of the problem. It is notorious that on the whole the greatest results of the labour of the human mind have since the Renaissance appeared in countries that are not Catholic. This is sometimes taken to be an argument in favour of the positive value of Protestantism; actually it is only an argument for the vital necessity of freedom. ‘The Protestant Churches,’ it has been said, ‘may have lost their hold, but the hold of the Roman Church of to-day is a hold that strangles.’ Certainly there is no remedy in a *régime* of Authority without Freedom for the spiritual sickness of mankind.

¹ Cf. Heiler (*op. cit.*, pp. 334–340), from whom I have almost literally translated.

CHAPTER III

THE REACTION AGAINST AUTHORITY

PROTESTANTISM, historically considered, was not primarily a revolt against the idea of authority in religion as such. It aimed rather at being a substitution of the authority of God for that of men. Actually it was a substitution of the authority of the Bible, as interpreted by reforming theologians, for that of the mediaeval Catholic tradition, as interpreted by the later schoolmen and as administered by contemporary Rome. The neo-Protestantism of to-day, which opposes to the 'Religions of Authority' the 'Religion of the Spirit,' may make its appeal indeed to one side of the teaching of the Reformers, namely to their emphasis upon inner individual experience, upon what they described as the *testimonium spiritus sancti* within the breast. But that is a concentration only upon one side of historical Protestantism, albeit in some ways the most characteristic side.

Historical Protestantism was an exceedingly complex movement, of which it is commonly held that the starting-point was in the religious experience of Luther, who appears to have been what is technically known to Catholicism as a scrupulous penitent.

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Aspiring to sanctity and failing to attain it, hyper-conscious of sin and obsessed by scruples, such souls derive no comfort from absolution, because they are unable to persuade themselves of the sufficiency of their contrition. Thus Luther became pre-occupied by what to him was the all-important, the agonising question, By what means is a sinful man to gain assurance of salvation ? The practice of Catholic asceticism and the use of the recognised 'means of grace' had failed to result, in the case of Luther, in the desired 'assurance.' In the writings of S. Paul it appeared to him that he was confronted with the self-utterance of a soul that had found such assurance, and that upon the basis of 'faith' as opposed to 'works.' The Biblical saying, 'The just shall live by faith,' touched, as it were, a psychological spring in the soul of Luther, and the result was the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith, which involved, in the judgment of Lutherans, a reinterpretation of the nature of piety, and therewith of such Catholic institutions as Lutheranism retained. The whole emphasis is thrown henceforward upon the Biblical Word, as containing the promises of God : salvation consists in whole-hearted assurance or confidence in the Divine Will to forgive sinners freely in Christ Jesus. The Church and its sacraments became secondary, the Bible primary. The latter was the pure Word of God : it contained the authoritative doctrine. It became for Protestantism, in Troeltsch's phrase, 'the instrument and source of the cultus' : the professional knowledge of it became the basis of the sacred office of the preacher, the Bible itself

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in a sense took the place of the hierarchy and sacraments. Such sacraments as were retained were retained on the ground that they were enjoined in the New Testament, but they tended among Protestants generally to be interpreted as being only particular ways of confirming men's confidence in the Biblical Word—though of course there were differences of doctrine, particularly in regard to the Eucharist, between Luther and Calvin and Zwingli.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that Protestantism was, at the outset, only a modification of Catholicism, in which, as Troeltsch has pointed out, the Catholic formulation of the problems was retained, though a different answer was given to them. The whole of the presuppositions of the Catholic theology of salvation were accepted, and Luther's problem was essentially the ancient problem of Catholicism as it confronts the individual from this particular point of view, viz. : What must I do to be saved ? In so far as Luther went beyond the point of view of Catholicism here, it was in desiring absolute assurance, a *guarantee* of the eternal salvation of his soul. Strictly speaking, for Catholicism there can be no such guarantee. The faithful Catholic may know, or may be justified in humbly believing, that he is 'in a state of grace,' that he has present access, as a child of God, to the heart of the eternal Father in Christ Jesus ; but he can have no guarantee of his own 'final perseverance.' Salvation must be worked out (in the phrase of S. Paul) 'with fear and trembling,' though in the faith that 'it is God which worketh in you.' ¹ The

¹ Philippians ii. 12-13.

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Church and the sacraments are for Catholicism at most the objective *sphere* of Christian salvation, mediating a grace which (though dependent for its efficacy upon a right disposition of the soul) is objectively real and assured. For Luther, who desired a *guarantee*, the 'external' authority of the Church and the sacraments appeared, because external, to be precarious and uncertain: moreover, in his own experience they had brought with them no 'assurance.' He had found certitude, or believed that he had done so, in the 'internal' assurance of faith, aroused and stimulated by the reading of the Scriptures. That this assurance was itself mediated by an 'external' means of grace, viz., the Scriptures themselves, did not disturb him. The Scriptures became, in effect, the great sacrament of Protestantism, its great 'objective' means of grace.

But can any assurance or subjective conviction of certitude really be trusted? Is not the human heart known to be 'deceitful above all things and desperately wicked'? How then can any given individual be *certain* that his 'faith' is really 'justifying faith'? Nay, is not the very act of faith itself—the initial decision to believe—if it is regarded as being an act of the believer himself, in the last resort a 'meritorious work'? It was to meet this difficulty, and to guarantee salvation to the elect by representing it as being from first to last wholly and exclusively the work of God, and not an achievement on the part of man, that the doctrine of Predestination was adopted by Protestant theologians, and became characteristic,

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in varying degrees, of Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Zwinglianism alike. Calvinism, of course, made the doctrine of Predestination the corner-stone of its whole theological system, deriving from this grim faith a certain rugged strength and austere forcefulness of character, though at the cost of the sacrifice of rationality and universal love as integral elements in the character of God. 'The consciously elect man,' writes Troeltsch, 'feels himself to be the destined lord of the world, who in the power of God and for the honour of God has it laid on him to grasp and shape the world.' 'The modern financier,' it has been remarked, 'when he is not the child of the Ghetto, is usually the grandchild of Geneva.' That curious document, the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England, steers as usual a skilfully non-committal course amidst the controversies of the period, when after drawing attention to the 'sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort' derived by godly persons from the consideration of Predestination, and of their Election in Christ, it proceeds to draw equal attention to the 'dangerous downfall' which may result if the 'sentence of God's Predestination' is held continually before the eyes of 'curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ': it is liable to 'thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.'¹ The Lutheran Church refused to make the necessary theological sacrifices at the altar of Predestination,

¹ Article XVII of the *Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both Provinces, and the whole Clergy, in the Convocation holden at London in the year 1562.*

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and accepted only a weakened form of the doctrine, with the result that Lutheranism everywhere tended to become subject in an Erastian sense to the power of the State, whereas Calvinism asserted the right of the Church to control the civil power.¹

Both systems, however, continued to hold firmly to the idea of the Church as the supernatural organ of salvation, even while they subordinated the Church to the Bible. The original Protestantism was, and intended to be, an authoritative Church civilisation. The aim and desire of the Reformers was not primarily schismatic: it was to effect a reformation of Christendom. Only against its will was Protestantism driven to set up Churches of its own. These became separated as Calvinist, Lutheran, or Reformed simply because of the divergences of view between the leading Reformers. They became separated as national Churches simply because it was only with the help of the civil authority that the Reformers were able to put their ideas into practice at all, and even with the help of that authority they were powerless eventually to extend them beyond national frontiers. The result of the continental Wars of Religion was in the end to establish simply the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*. Within the borders of each State there was to be uniformity. The original Protestantism persecuted, exactly as did Catholicism, and by the same force of logic. The Reformers would have nothing to do with the 'Free Church' idea. Towards the Anabaptists, with their sectarian and individualistic illuminism and their assertion of the Church's

¹ Cf. Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress* [E. T.], pp. 62-63.

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independence of the State, the Protestantism of Luther and Calvin and Zwingli showed itself relentlessly and bitterly opposed. Their ideal everywhere was that of the 'godly Prince' or of the equally godly Civil Magistrate, enforcing within their respective spheres of jurisdiction the true worship of God in accordance with the injunctions laid down by godly ministers of the Word. The small sects, however Christian they might claim to be in principle, could not be tolerated. They made for division and divergence of doctrine, thereby tending to discredit the authority of truth as revealed in the Bible and as understood by the majority. They held aloof from the State, they drew people apart into small conventicles and pietistic circles, and they urged the abandonment of compulsion in matters of religion. They were, in Troeltsch's phrase, 'the stepchildren of the Reformation.' They undermined the very idea of an authoritative Church civilisation, and in all the respects which have been named they were opposed diametrically to the leading principles of the great Reformers, who were at one with the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages in being unable to hold a revelation to be a true revelation which did not subordinate everything human to the Divine.¹

The divergences between the three leading forms of what Troeltsch has described as the 'Church' type of Protestantism—the Calvinist, Lutheran, and Evangelical or Reformed—and their respective territorial distribution as it emerged finally in the course of the sixteenth century in Europe, affects

¹ Cf Troeltsch, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

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still to a certain extent the religious situation in certain of the countries of Europe even to-day. Nevertheless the older orthodox Protestantism of what has been called the Confessional Period¹ fell to pieces for a variety of reasons. As Troeltsch caustically remarks, 'three infallible "Churches," unchurching and anathematising one another, discredited the idea of the Church, for which there is no plural': and 'when disgust at the Confessional confusions, combined with the development of humanistic science, caused an attack to be made upon the Churches generally, Protestantism was not able to maintain its previous position—has, indeed, in many respects endeavoured to come into inner relations with the new forces, and in this way has variously and profoundly altered its inner religious character.'²

Among the complex of causes which occasioned the break-up, or at least transformation of the older Confessional Protestantism, an important part was played by the struggle of the Independents for liberty of conscience. It is pointed out by Troeltsch that of the Puritan States of North America only two were originally tolerant, viz., Rhode Island, which was Baptist, and Pennsylvania, which was Quaker: and that both are connected with the great religious movement of the English Revolution—Independency. 'It was now at last,' as he expresses it, 'the turn of the step-children of the Reformation to have their great hour in the history

¹ So called from the numerous 'Confessions of Faith' put forth by the different Protestant 'Churches.'

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 89-92.

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of the world.' The Cromwellian Commonwealth, short-lived but extremely important in its influence on subsequent history, represented the idea of a Christian State which should leave the form of the worship of God free to the different independent congregations, while securing Christian morality by strict regulations, and employing the civil power in the service of the Christian cause. It is true that in this Commonwealth neither Anglicanism nor Romanism was tolerated, and that the Puritan regulation of manners and morals quickly proved itself an intolerable tyranny. Nevertheless, as the legacy of this episode as a whole Troeltsch signalises the great ideas of the separation of Church and State, the toleration of different Church societies alongside of one another on a basis of voluntary membership, and a certain relative (though at first only relative) liberty of conviction in all matters of world-view and religion.¹ In a sense the acceptance of these ideas marked the triumph in principle of what Troeltsch describes as the 'Sect' type of Protestantism over the 'Church' type. The only immediate consequence, however, in a predominantly rationalistic age was the emergence of the eighteenth-century idea of toleration—an idea largely political, utilitarian, and grounded, for the most part, in scepticism and religious indifference. In England, at least, the eighteenth century was the age of the Deists, the champions of 'Natural Religion,' whose orthodox opponents were not less rationalistic than they: and abroad, too, it was the age of the Enlightenment, in which Protestant

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 124-125.

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scholasticism was overthrown by a rationalism as barren as itself.

The transition to the modern situation was heralded by the pietistic and romantic revivals, both of which deeply influenced Schleiermacher, who has been described, somewhat profanely, by Sabatier as 'the Messiah of the new era.'¹ It is not fair, because it is not the whole truth, to say of Schleiermacher that he based religion simply upon feeling, and in particular upon the feeling of dependence. It would be fairer to say that he attempted to base the theory of religion upon an analysis of the data of the religious consciousness. His great contribution lay in his insistence upon the necessity for recognising religion as a fact, as a permanent element in human nature, not reducible either to pure thought on the one hand or to morality on the other. It was unfortunate that in thus championing in a rationalistic age the right of religion to exist, he was content to define religion as merely 'sense and taste for the Infinite.' This of course was meant as a definition of religion in general terms, and not as a description of any particular religion. Schleiermacher held that if any advance were to be made beyond such generalities, it could only be done by studying religion historically and in the concrete, always, however, in the process, endeavouring to view it sympathetically as from within: to treat it, that is to say, in each of its particular manifestations as a specific form of human piety, historically conditioned. He was thus, in a sense, the parent

¹ Sabatier, *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit* [E.T.], p. 209.

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of the modern comparative and historical method. This did not, of course, mean that Schleiermacher was precluded from recognising an objective basis in religion: he sought, in fact, to relate his study of religion as a form of consciousness to a real theology, a doctrine of God. Unfortunately, however, Schleiermacher's doctrine of God was a form of pantheism; and though that has not been in all cases true of those who have been influenced by him—amongst whom must virtually be included all subsequent Protestant theologians—the subjectivist trend of his thinking is clearly manifest, and has proved fruitful of unfortunate results. If religion in general is defined as 'sense and taste for the Infinite,' Dorner can go so far as to say that 'according to Schleiermacher, Christianity consists in the feeling or consciousness of Redemption.'¹ On his weaker side it would thus appear that Schleiermacher is the forerunner of modern tendencies to substitute religious experience for God as the object of religious knowledge, and the psychology of religion for theology, tendencies which are a source of obvious weakness in some modern presentations of religion.

It is claimed by Sabatier that in Schleiermacher 'the work of Luther was prolonged without inconsistency; it was freed from the shreds of Catholicism which for more than two centuries had painfully encumbered it, and enabled to concentrate itself and find life in its own peculiar principle of personal faith and immediate experience of truth.'² Nevertheless the reaction which succeeded to the

¹ Quoted by Selbie, *Schleiermacher*, p. 247.

² Sabatier, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

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period of the French Revolution and the life-and-death struggle of the Napoleonic Wars made its influence felt also in theology, and the German disciples of Schleiermacher had to struggle against a new Lutheran orthodoxy which, supported by pietism, fell back upon the sixteenth century Confessions of Faith and the infallible authority of the letter of the Bible. Just as for mediaeval Catholicism the Church was a miraculous institution, so the Bible was for this new Lutheran orthodoxy a wholly miraculous Book—not a literature which had been gradually and historically developed, but a Divine Word introduced into history *ab extra* by the immediate act of God. This new orthodoxy was shattered, not by rationalism as in the case of the earlier Protestant orthodoxy, but by the new historical culture and the ‘science’ or method of Biblical Criticism which it inevitably developed. ‘Nothing in Protestant theology,’ remarks Sabatier, ‘could prevail over the historical method and principle. Those who tried to arrest the current sooner or later found themselves carried along by it. This revolution was different from that of the eighteenth century. Voltaire and his disciples had no more the historic than the religious sense. On the other hand, a deeper piety inspires the new criticism.’¹

Much of the new piety, however, was in its essence the subjectivist piety of Schleiermacher. Meanwhile for D. F. Strauss and his school the Gospels were of value simply as being the symbolical expression in terms of popular mythology of spiritual truths expressed in a less poetic form in the

¹ Sabatier, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

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philosophy of Hegel. Inasmuch as in their eyes the idea was everything, the facts virtually nothing, they freely explained away, as historical critics, the substance of the Gospel story as little more than a deposit of myth and legend. It was largely in reaction against such a position that Albrecht Ritschl entered the lists. For him religion was essentially more and other than philosophy. It was not a mere intellectual insight, it was a profound and distinctive spiritual experience; and its basis was not in the realm of speculative ideas, but in the realm of historical facts. It is extraordinarily difficult to characterise adequately the many-sided movement in modern theology which, in greater or less degree, has been influenced and inspired by the work of Ritschl.¹ Fortunately I am able at this point, instead of attempting to cover the ground wholly myself, to refer to the admirable pages in which the main tendencies of the Ritschlian theology, alike in their strength and in their weakness, are summed up and judiciously criticised by my predecessor in this lectureship.²

¹ Sympathetic, though by no means uncritical, appreciations of Ritschlianism are to be found in A. E. Garvie, *The Ritschlian Theology*, and J. K. Mozley, *Ritschlianism*; less favourable estimates in E. A. Edghill, *Faith and Fact: A Study of Ritschlianism*; and J. Orr, *The Ritschlian Theology*. Ritschl's own great work on *Justification and Reconciliation* has been translated into English. The best positive statement, easily accessible to English readers, of the Ritschlian position by one of its most prominent advocates, is the translation in the Crown Theological Library of W. Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God*. I wish here to acknowledge that the few somewhat scornful sentences referring to this book in the essay on 'The Principle of Authority,' contributed by me to *Foundations* in 1912, are inaccurate and misleading.

² O. C. Quick, *Liberalism, Modernism, and Tradition*, pp. 10-23.

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Ritschl himself was in philosophy a neo-Kantian, and the Ritschlians attempt to extrude metaphysics from theology ; that is to say, in a metaphysical sense they are agnostics. But this metaphysical agnosticism is combined with an historical positivism which is extremely congenial to the contemporary mind. For them as for Schleiermacher religion is primarily an affair of the spiritual 'consciousness'—an internal state of the soul. But this 'consciousness,' in so far as it is Christian, is a consciousness evoked and determined by the fact of the Jesus of history, whose portrait is found in the Gospels. The objective reality of Jesus is regarded as being determined by a judgment of faith, which in Jesus sees God, known as real in virtue of the effects of His operation in the soul of the believer. In this way, it is claimed, the historical reality of Jesus is made independent of any conceivable verdict of criticism. Confronted by Jesus, the soul of the man who submits to His influence and working is inwardly subdued, and becomes certain at once of the reality of God and of His fatherly goodness, of the forgiveness of sins, and of sonship to God : a sonship which includes on the one hand inner spiritual freedom and lordship over the world (which is what the Ritschlian school understands by eternal life), and on the other hand the possibility and obligation of the new religious ethic of the Kingdom of God, on the basis of communion with the God who in Jesus is historically revealed. In this way it is claimed that in the judgment of faith (to which the somewhat misleading name of 'value-judgment' is commonly given) there is

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involved a whole Christian *Weltanschauung* or world-view, on the basis of which life henceforward must be inwardly lived : a world-view which (it is claimed) is of superior validity to any which could possibly be reached by the methods of metaphysical speculation, and which is wholly independent of the impersonal and abstract world-view which is built up by the scientific understanding.

Both in its positive affirmations and in its implicit or explicit denials, this Ritschlian presentation of Christianity has been widely influential. Designed as a new apologetic adapted to the needs of a generation metaphysically sceptical and given over to historical researches, it has been eagerly adopted as such even by those who are altogether unconscious of its origin. It underlies all the new emphasis on the manhood of Jesus as the sphere of His Godhead : it is the basis of all the new preaching which, without presupposing doctrinal assumptions, is content to aim simply at bringing men face to face with the historical fact of the personality of Jesus and allowing Him to speak, as it were, for Himself, and to do His own work in the soul. It is hoped, then, that the miracle may happen, and that 'faith,' in the Ritschlian sense, may result.

There is no doubt that as a method of approach to Christianity this Ritschlian presentation in numberless individual cases has proved itself helpful. It is the method which proceeds rather *per Christum ad Patrem* than by any more deductive process *de Deo ad Christum*. And an inductive method of procedure was in harmony with the spirit of the age. Bishop Talbot, late of Winchester, has told us how a

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generation ago at Oxford a representative theologian of the older school remarked to him, after hearing an University sermon by Scott Holland, ' I have always been trained to think of Christian theology as derived by deduction from fixed principles : but this seems an assertion of its inductive character.' ¹ But in truth no actual thinking is simply and purely inductive : our procedure is always in some degree both inductive and deductive at once. Those who would argue deductively, starting from the nature of God as otherwise known, and proceeding in the light of the conception of God which they had thus antecedently formed to the recognition of God as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, cannot mean that the revelation in Christ contributes nothing essentially new to their antecedent knowledge of God : for that would be to rob the Incarnation, in so far as it is regarded as being a *revelation* of God, of its purpose and point. Conversely, even the contention of the extremer Ritschlians that we have no clear knowledge of God at all, apart from the revelation in Jesus Christ, at least presupposes that the term ' God ' conveys some antecedent meaning to our minds, so that to speak of a revelation of ' God ' is not simply equivalent to speaking of a revelation of ' X.' As a matter of fact the Ritschlian contention that the knowledge of God is *exclusively* mediated by the Jesus of history, even to Christians, is one of the weakest and most indefensible elements in the Ritschlian position.

¹ The anecdote is told by Dr. Talbot, at that time Bishop of Southwark, in a preface contributed in 1910 to the late Mr. Edghill's book on Ritschlianism (*Faith and Fact*).

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Herrmann, indeed, does admit that he has no 'wish to assert, even for a moment, that the savages of New Holland have no knowledge of God, no pulsations of true religion, and therefore no communion with God,' but he adds that 'we do not know through what medium such knowledge and such communion reach them.'¹ Strict Ritschlian orthodoxy regards it as somehow illegitimate to find God anywhere except in the Jesus of history and in the work which He does in the soul of the Christian believer. It does regard Jesus as the Mediator, alike of the knowledge of God and of the experience of redemption. For the more positive and orthodox Ritschlians it is even legitimate to confess Jesus as God, provided that by this statement is meant no more than that He is discovered in experience to have accomplished a Divine work in the soul of the Christian and to have made him inwardly certain of the reality of God and of his own inner freedom and access to the Father. It is regarded, however, as illegitimate for anyone but a believer to make such a confession: it must be a judgment of personal experience, and as such the consummation, and not the beginning, of a man's Christianity. To *begin* by accepting, either on rational grounds, or on the authority of others, or of tradition, or of the Church, any doctrine whatever, is regarded as being in principle a falling back upon the fundamental error of Catholicism: it is condemned as black treachery to the principles of Luther, now finally purged of the remnants of Catholicism and developed to their logical conclusion by Ritschl.

¹ *The Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 62.

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This means, strictly speaking, that the Ritschlian preacher is precluded from preaching the Divinity of Christ, or indeed from preaching doctrine at all. He may only preach Jesus, and endeavour to awaken in others the peculiar experience of 'faith.' He may indeed testify, 'See what Jesus has done for my soul,' but he may hardly do more. His whole function is summed up in the attempt, as it were, to introduce men to Jesus, and to allow Him to do the rest. Anything else would be an illegitimate interference, the intrusion of human mediation between Christ and the soul. To teach or preach doctrine would be to run the risk of awakening a spurious and second-hand faith, a faith not based on personal experience; just as any affirmation of the Godhead of Jesus which involved the assertion that He possessed a Divine *nature*, as distinct from the assertion that He had accomplished a Divine work in the soul, would be an intrusion into theology of the forbidden 'metaphysics.'

There are forms of modern theology, of course, which are far less positive in their attitude towards the person of our Lord than is orthodox Ritschlianism. In the wider sense Ritschlianism is rather a method than a system, and its influence extends far beyond the circle of Ritschl's immediate disciples. Those of whom I have spoken as more or less orthodox Ritschlians are all at one in assigning, though in their own peculiar fashion, a very positive and wholly unique function to the historical Jesus as the one Mediator for Christians of the knowledge of God and the assurance of redemption from sin and the world. There are other modern teachers

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for whom the function and person of Jesus are distinctly less central. For the late Wilhelm Bousset Christianity is simply 'the religion of religious individualism raised to its highest point' ¹; it is summed up in the formula 'God and the soul.' The function of Jesus is primarily that of a pathfinder: He is rather the first Christian than an object of faith and devotion: He points us to God. At the same time it is recognised that 'Jesus did not merely teach the forgiveness of sins; He poured it forth upon the world. . . . Thus a stream of certainty concerning the forgiveness of sins has flowed into our world through Him, and continues to exercise an influence in a thousand links and chains through the communion of His spirit.' ² The position of Sabatier is similar. For him Jesus, as the supreme pioneer of the religion of the spirit, is the Master of Christians, rather than their Lord. He is 'the freely elected Master of our souls. This is the primary meaning, the moral and religious meaning, of the word *Kύριος*, Lord. . . . His authority is not that of any letter whatsoever; it arises from the outshining of the inner consciousness of Jesus, a radiation of holiness, of love, of the presence of God within him.' ³ Any worship of Jesus is simply '*Jesusolatry* . . . as truly an idolatry as the adoration of the Virgin and the saints. It is as repugnant to Protestant piety in its deep instinctive tendency as to the primitive gospel. Jesus never claimed worship for himself.' ⁴ Jesus, in short, is for Sabatier

¹ W. Bousset, *The Faith of a Modern Protestant* [E.T.], p. 36.

² Bousset, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

³ Sabatier, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

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always 'the man Jesus'; in one sense our Master, but ultimately on a level with ourselves in relation to God, since according to him the effect of 'experimental faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ' is to produce in us 'a religious consciousness identical with that of Jesus.'¹

Modern Protestant theology, as thus far expounded, appears to conceive of religion as being primarily a peculiar form of consciousness, an internal state of the soul. It is an attitude of 'faith' towards God, a conviction of the reality of God and of His fatherly love, which, provided it be attained, has the effect of 'eternalising' life by imparting to it a wholly new qualitative value. It will be remembered that, as we have seen, the original problem of Luther was simply the problem of how to gain assurance of the eternal salvation of his soul. Modern Protestantism is on the whole less concerned with the eternal salvation of souls. Such anxiety as that of Luther it is apt to condemn, first as selfish, and secondly as a form of 'other-worldly' religion. As Troeltsch aptly points out, in the forms of modern Protestantism of which we have been speaking, Luther's way has been treated as being of more importance than his goal, the answer to his question as of greater significance than the question itself.²

It will be remembered that for Ritschlianism eternal life was conceived simply as inner spiritual freedom and lordship over the world. So regarded, it has no necessary or inherent connexion with the life of the world to come. Individuals may vary in their

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 274.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

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attitude towards the hope of a hereafter, but it remains for the majority of Ritschlians a hope rather than a positive conviction. The combination of historical positivism with metaphysical agnosticism, the antipathy to 'mysticism' (by which Ritschlians appear to understand any kind of communion with God which is not mediated directly by the Jesus of history), combined with the strong vein of moralism which runs through the writers of this school, make it impossible that they should attach much significance to the doctrine of an eschatological salvation. The note of life-and-death urgency drops out of the preaching of the Gospel, as it has tended to drop out of modern Protestant preaching in general. 'The Catholic Church,' remarked a Roman Catholic priest, 'believes in Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. The old-fashioned orthodox Protestant believed in Heaven and Hell, but not in Purgatory. The modern new-fangled Protestant believes in Heaven and Purgatory, but not in Hell.' It would be truer to say that for many of the most typically modern Protestants the centre of religious interest has been almost wholly displaced from the next world to this.

This is not, of course, to say that for the most typically modern Protestant teachers religion is not regarded as being of central and vital importance. There is indeed in the modern Protestant world an abundance of moral and religious earnestness, an abundance of individual piety and even of saintliness. The trouble is rather that religion tends in the minds of many people to be *identified* with piety, and piety with a particular kind of 'consciousness.' The Protestant type of saintliness,

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externally regarded, appears to many observers to be slightly self-conscious, uninteresting, and limited in range. In the severity of its concentration upon 'the Gospel,' and upon the Gospel alone, Protestantism appears lacking in the rich variety of differing and complementary religious types which Catholicism affords. The habit, moreover, of seeking the reality of God primarily in the spiritual experience of individuals tends inevitably in the direction of subjectivism. The impression is sometimes conveyed that the modern Protestant believer regards God almost as though He were a personal possession.

For it is the root-and-branch individualism of Protestantism which is part of the trouble. It is true that this is sometimes denied. A good deal of importance is attached by the Ritschlians to the idea of the community, the Christian *Gemeinde*. It is even affirmed that it is only from the standpoint of membership in the Christian community that faith is intelligible, and Herrmann, for example, emphatically recognises a certain mediation of communion with God by the environment of the community.¹ It is in the fellowship of believers that spiritual life is appropriately nurtured and nourished. It is recognised that it is the Church that has given us the New Testament, and that, whether directly or indirectly, we owe it to the mediation of the Church that we are introduced to the Jesus of history at all. Nevertheless, it is insisted that 'God must come near to each individual soul in a special manner'—a half truth which is interpreted in such a fashion

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 189 seq.

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as to make of the community virtually a collection of isolated units. Ritschl himself indeed had maintained, on the basis of a study of the New Testament, that the community, rather than the individual, was the object, properly speaking, of justification or reconciliation with God, but in this he has not been followed by his disciples. The individualistic tradition of Protestantism proved too strong.

There is, in point of fact, in this controversy an element of truth on both sides. There is a sense in which it is true that 'God enters into a personal relation with each individual soul.' The children of Christian parents are admitted by Baptism one by one into the Christian community, and it is important that they should subsequently enter, individually and consciously, into the implications of Baptism and membership of Christ, upon a basis of personal faith. So again in the work of the Church's missions to the heathen, whether at home or abroad, a man must first be individually and genuinely converted to Christ before he can rightly be baptised. It is nevertheless true—and as true in the sphere of religion as in that of secular politics and social life generally—that the individual, regarded as an isolated unit, is a thoroughly unreal abstraction, and that individualism as a philosophy of life is profoundly and radically false. And Ritschl is so far right, as against his opponents, in pointing out that the function of Christ as Redeemer, according to the New Testament, is that of Redeemer in relation to Israel, and that the idea of an isolated Christian, standing somehow apart from the Church as the redeemed 'Israel of God,' would

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have appeared to the New Testament writers unthinkable.

To the followers of Ritschl, and to the modern type of Protestant in general, such a conception is by no means unthinkable: though it is regarded as natural and right that a Christian, when once he has come to be aware of his Christian relationship to Christ, should associate himself with the Church. But the Church is conceived frankly as an association of devout individuals, a fellowship of believers, a kind of devotional club. There is little consciousness of churchmanship as being essentially a membership in Christendom as a whole, a sacramental incorporation into the mystical Body of the Christ, the universal Israel of God. In many circles, indeed, the idea of the Church has been virtually lost behind that of 'the Churches.' Moreover, by a 'Church' tends to be meant primarily a small local fellowship of believers, a particular 'congregation.' I gather from Dr. William Adams Brown's recent volume, *The Church in America*, that this is even more generally true of American than of European Protestant Christianity. Dr. Brown writes of a point of view from which even denominationalism may easily appear to be of the nature of an enlargement of mind.¹ It is among the consequences of such a state of affairs that there are large numbers of Protestant Christians

¹ Cf. Wm. Adams Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 73. 'Denominationalism may identify its own enterprises with those of ecumenical Christianity and lead its adherents to regard other forms of Christian belief or worship as negligible or unimportant: but at least it reminds them of a world larger than Smithtown or Jonesville.'

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to-day who appear to be unable to think of unity, even as an ideal, except in terms of a federation of distinct and permanently differing 'Churches,' agreeing to differ. Organic unity, the ideal of one holy and universal Church extended throughout the whole world, knit together in one communion and fellowship, receiving from common altars and at the hands of a common ministry the supreme Christian sacrament of unity and love, one Body even as there is one Spirit—such an ideal is widely regarded as being a frankly impossible dream. In some quarters it is regarded as being not even desirable. In many it is regarded as being simply a mirage of the ecclesiastical and Catholic mind.

CHAPTER IV

THE REACTION AGAINST AUTHORITY (*continued*)

IN the last chapter I devoted a good deal of space to the consideration of the Ritschlian Theology of faith. I deliberately did so, not because modern Protestantism as a whole has been consciously captured by Ritschlianism, but because Ritschlianism is the clearest presentation of the implicit theology of Protestantism generally, wherever it has abandoned its reliance, in the old-fashioned sense, upon the letter of the Bible. To this extent I believe the claim made by the Ritschlians themselves to have been the first theologians who have developed to its logical conclusion the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith to be a true one.

There is, however, another side to the teaching of Ritschl which is equally illuminating, as affording the clue to the interpretation of an aspect of modern Protestant Christianity which is even more prominent to-day than its doctrine of faith and corresponding conception of piety—I mean the new prominence which Ritschlianism gives to the idea of the Kingdom of God, conceived as ‘the universal moral community, the aspect under which humanity

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is included in God's purpose for Himself.' ¹ This is not indeed precisely the New Testament conception of the Kingdom of God, nor was it primarily derived from an historical exegesis of the New Testament texts. It is primarily a philosophical conception, derived by Ritschl from the teaching of Kant, though of course since Ritschl made it one of the two 'foci' of Christianity ² the New Testament has very widely been read in the light of it. It came to be very commonly believed that the phrase 'Kingdom of God' in the New Testament denoted either an inward principle of spiritual life in the soul of the individual believer—in which connexion great play was made with the Lucan saying, 'The Kingdom of God is within you' ³—or an ideal state of human society to be gradually realised and brought about by the efforts of believers, who were not merely to pray but to work for the doing of God's will upon the earth. The coming of God's Kingdom was regarded as the goal of Christian endeavour, a task or enterprise to which believers everywhere were to set their hands. This particular reading of the New Testament has been effectively challenged in the name of historical science by the so-called 'eschatological' school of Schweitzer and the late Johannes Weiss, who, whatever the exaggerations of which they may have been guilty

¹ Quoted by Garvie from Herrmann's *Die Religion im Verhältnis zum Weiterkennen und zur Sittlichkeit*. The translation is apparently Garvie's.

² The reference is to Ritschl's famous description of Christianity as 'an ellipse with two foci'—the two foci in question being Justification by Faith and the Kingdom of God.

³ Luke xvii. 21.

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in the development of their thesis, would seem in the main issues to have succeeded in making good their point.

The newer reading of the documents is broadly as follows. In the New Testament the Kingdom of God means, in the first place, the Sovereignty of God, regarded as being about to be decisively and victoriously asserted in such a fashion as to involve the downfall of all hostile and evil forces, and the complete and final end of whatever in the world as it actually is—i.e., in the present 'Age'—is not in accordance with God's will. The idea is thus primarily an eschatological conception: it is concerned with the 'Age to Come': as such it is an object of prayer and of Christian longing and future hope. In the second place, inasmuch as in Judaism too it was held that when God established His *Malkuth* or 'Sovereignty' the saints were to 'possess' it,¹ the 'little flock' who formed the nucleus of the true Israel after the Spirit were the destined inheritors of the Kingdom of God,² and to 'enter' the Kingdom was equivalent to entering into 'life' (i.e., primarily 'eternal life' in the eschatological sense).³ The Kingdom thus becomes practically identified with eternal salvation; it is in any case an object of primary concern,⁴ a treasure worth the sacrifice of everything else.⁵ Of course, the joys of the Kingdom are spiritual—its essence is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.⁶ In certain of the parables

¹ Daniel vii. 22.

² Cf. Mark x. 23 with x. 17.

³ Matt. xiii. 44-46.

⁴ Luke xii. 32.

⁵ Matt. vi. 33.

⁶ Rom. xiv. 17.

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in S. Matthew the Kingdom of God¹ appears to be identified with the world² or with the Christian Ecclesia,³ regarded as the present and provisional sphere of God's Sovereignty; but the eschatological reference is seen in the fact that these are parables of the judgment—they look forward to the 'end of the Age,' when 'all things that cause stumbling and they that do iniquity' shall be removed from the sphere of God's Sovereignty.⁴ It is notorious that the earliest Christianity thought of the 'end of the Age' and the Judgment as close at hand: in the teaching of our Lord also the Kingdom is 'at hand'—that fact constitutes the urgency of His call to repentance.⁵ This Age and the Age to Come already begin, as it were, to overlap; and in mighty works of the Spirit the Kingdom of God has come unexpectedly upon men (ἐφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς);⁶ it is in their midst though they do not realise it;⁷ the consummation may be rapid as the growth of a mustard-plant,⁸ inscrutable as the working of leaven in meal.⁹ Christians, in particular, are already living, in a certain sense, in the Age to Come: their 'citizenship' is 'in heaven,'¹⁰ and they have 'tasted' the 'powers of the Coming Age.'¹¹

Divergence of view is possible as to the meaning

¹ The Matthaean phrase 'Kingdom of heaven,' or more accurately 'Kingdom of the heavens,' is identical in meaning with 'Kingdom of God,' 'Heaven' or 'the Heavens' being an accepted Jewish paraphrase for the Divine Name.

² Matt. xiii. 24 *sqq.*, 36 *sqq.*

³ Matt. xiii. 47 *sqq.*

⁴ Matt. xiii. 41.

⁵ Mark i. 15.

⁶ Matt. xii. 28.

⁷ Luke xvii. 21. I cannot but think that ἐν τῷ ὄντι in this verse is an attempt to render some Aramaic phrase meaning 'in your midst.'

⁸ Matt. xiii. 31-32.

⁹ Matt. xiii. 33.

¹⁰ Philippians iii. 20.

¹¹ Heb. vi. 5.

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of certain of these texts. Some scholars lay more stress upon the view that the Kingdom in some passages is regarded as being already present, albeit proleptically and in an incomplete form. Others defend still the older view that the parables of the Leaven and of the Mustard Seed, as also that of the Sower (which appears primarily to reflect our Lord's own personal experience as a preacher), are intended to express the idea of the growth from insignificant beginnings of the Christian Church, regarded as virtually equivalent to the Kingdom, as being the sphere of its partial realisation. Nevertheless the propositions cannot well be disputed (1) that the term 'Kingdom of God' in the New Testament expresses, primarily at least, an eschatological conception; (2) that by the phrase 'Kingdom of God,' whether the Kingdom is rightly to be regarded as partly present or as wholly future, is meant primarily an assertion of the Divine Sovereignty; and (3) that in that meaning of it in which the Kingdom is regarded as future, its establishment is not in the New Testament represented as being the task or duty of the Christian Church. The Kingdom is regarded as being wholly the gift and the work of God, who will bring it to pass in His good time. The Lord Jesus of the Gospels is not the 'Founder' of the Kingdom: He is the Son of Man who announces God's Kingdom as close at hand, and who is at the same time the Messianic Redeemer of God's people. The task which in the New Testament is assigned to the Christian Church is essentially *preparatory* to the coming of the Kingdom. It is not that of 'building'

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or 'hastening' the Kingdom of God. It is that of proclaiming the Gospel to every creature.

The conception of the Kingdom of God which is so prevalent to-day, in which it is identified simply with the Christian ideal, and particularly with the ideal of 'a better social order for which to work,'¹ is one which finds no direct support in the New Testament. That it is incumbent on Christians to do all in their power, with the help of God, to promote a better social order goes without saying: but it was not disloyalty to Jesus, or misunderstanding of the true nature of Christianity, which caused the Apostles, after the Resurrection and the coming of the Spirit, to devote themselves not so much to proclaiming the Kingdom of God as to preaching Christ. They did not primarily attempt to promote a better social order. They sought rather to win converts who were to be admitted by Baptism and built up into the Church, the New Israel of God. The coming of the Kingdom was God's concern: they looked forward to it as to a sure and certain hope. When as the result of their preaching the Christian Church gradually spread and extended its influence, despite the opposition of the State, until in the fourth century the Church so far triumphed as to be taken into alliance with the Empire, and the foundations of what later on developed into the Mediaeval Compromise were laid, a better social order than that of paganism did actually result. In the Church-Empire of the Middle Ages men saw, and to a certain extent they were justified in seeing,

¹ I adopt the phrase from Dr. W. Adams Brown (*The Church in America*, p. 20).

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an earthly counterpart of the Kingdom of God, the *Civitas Dei*, realised in partial fashion upon the earth. The civilisation of the Middle Ages was, as we have already seen, in a very real sense a Christian civilisation—Christian in the same kind of sense and degree in which the civilisation of our own times, broadly regarded, is more and more secularised and pagan.

We have seen that one result of the breakdown of Mediaevalism was that the various spiritual interests, which in Mediaeval times had been held together in a kind of provisional unity by the co-ordinating authority of a Church which was then generally accepted, tended to fall apart and become specialised. In Protestant countries just as much as in Catholic, with the progressive abandonment of the original Protestant dream of a Church-civilisation which should be merely a reformed and purified version of that of Catholicism, religion itself became a specialised affair. The religious man, as Protestantism came to conceive of him, was the man who specialised in piety, and who on Sundays attended church. Apart from this his religion was expected to express itself in ethical behaviour in accordance with Christian standards, especially in the personal, private, and domestic relationships of life. As time went on the sphere in which religion continued to be effectively operative became progressively narrowed. Art and the drama (which for Puritanism were both alike taboo) were the first to be abandoned as activities essentially secular and even wicked ; philosophy and science, economics and politics, the whole modern world of business

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and industry, successively and gradually followed suit ; with the result that religion tended to survive either as little more than a tolerated convention, or else as a merely specialised interest of pious people.

From acquiescence in such a relegation of religion to the position of a merely specialised interest, essentially parasitic upon modern life and civilisation as a whole, what appeared to be the virtually new Gospel of the Kingdom of God in the modern sense was acclaimed, and has tended to operate, as a great deliverance and a message of new hope. Claiming the whole of life with all its manifold interests, and the whole order of society and of human affairs, as the true and essential province and sphere of applied Christianity, it has made its appeal to every generous enthusiasm, and, taken as a kind of regulative idea—the doing of God's will on earth, as it is in heaven—it has inspired all manner of activity and social service and missionary enterprise in the Protestantism of to-day. It has virtually created a new type of modern religion. It has inspired great saints, who in all their activities have depended wholly upon God.

Nevertheless it is not, taken simply by itself, a sufficient or adequate Gospel for the man in the street. It is not really true to the balance of Christianity as presented in the New Testament, and it employs a New Testament expression—the Kingdom of God—in a sense seriously different from that which in the New Testament it bears. Interpreted as the promise of a social Utopia, the proclamation of the message of the

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Kingdom may quite easily give rise to expectations not destined to be realised. Interpreted as a challenge to merely strenuous activity, it may easily give rise to the identification of religion with good works. It is sometimes forgotten that the preaching of the Christian ideal is no substitute for the preaching of Christ, nor is preoccupation with a world of new movements calculated to make a man effectively Christian without spiritual discipline and prayer. Enthusiasm for 'the Kingdom' is occasionally combined with an even violent antipathy towards 'the Church,' with its old-fashioned ways and its ordered devotional tradition. Occasionally it is forgotten that Christianity is not rightly defined as the service of man,¹ and that the service of man, on the level of supernatural heroism which Christianity demands, can be effective and possible only on the basis of what the Apostle describes as 'a life hid with Christ in God'—a life only to be built up on a foundation of repentance, by regular and disciplined worship, communion, and prayer. There have been instances in which I have received the impression that the activities of what is sometimes called 'Kingdom-Christianity' have been positively welcomed as distractions from what might otherwise have been the necessity of actual and personal religion: they have served as a temporary anodyne for the soul.

In its generous enthusiasms this type of

¹ A gifted Frenchman remarks that 'to serve God, in the language of the Anglo-Saxons, both in America and in England, where religion inclines more and more to pragmatism, means to serve man.' (André Chevrillon, *Three Studies in English Literature*, p. 87.)

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Christianity appeals more particularly to the young, to whom it commends itself as a delightful short cut to the christianisation of life. But there are no short cuts to the christianisation of life. The modern world can only be made Christian by the process of evangelisation, by the actual christianisation of its multitudes of pagans. A Christian order of society, such as existed in some degree in mediaeval times, can only come into existence again by the conversion or reconversion of the world to Christianity, not by the imposition of Christian ideals by a minority of enthusiasts upon a society fundamentally pagan. A study-circle for the discussion of social problems existed last year in a certain College at Oxford in which the participants, when asked what they were engaged in doing, replied with conscious humour that they were 'putting the world right.' It is good that undergraduates should engage in the study of social problems from the Christian point of view, good that young men should see visions, and that old men should dream dreams. There has been in respect of all these matters too narrow an outlook in Protestant Christianity hitherto. But the world is not going to be put right by such means, or by any enterprise on the part of man. It is not in virtue of any kingdom or of any city built up by men upon the earth that the broken heart of the world will ever be made whole; it is only in the light of a City not made with hands, and of a salvation coming down out of heaven from God.

There is, of course, strength as well as weakness in the type of religion in question. There is fre-

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quently passion and earnestness and not a little of the faith that moves mountains behind it, and in itself it represents a wider religious vision than that of the type of devotion which is content with a merely self-centred specialisation in piety, whether Protestant or Catholic. It is both right and also vitally necessary that Christians should endeavour to form some idea of what life in the world would be like if the spiritual sovereignty of Christ and of God were the really determinative principle of world-civilisation ; that they should live in the light of that vision and be content with nothing less ; that their lives should be ordered on the principles of sacrifice and self-denying service ; and that in so far as they have influence, individually or corporately, in the actual ordering and conduct of social, municipal, economic or international affairs, they should make that influence tell in a steadily Christian direction. It is essential that modern Christianity should not be content to be merely a specialised interest, competing for recognition side by side with other interests in a spiritually divided civilisation ; that, on the contrary, it should deliberately and consciously claim on behalf of its Divine Lord the supreme, absolute, and unifying spiritual sovereignty over the whole of the affairs of mankind.

It is nevertheless as profound a mistake to identify the activities of any particular generation of Christians with the coming of the Kingdom of God, as it is to identify the Kingdom itself with a social Utopia. It is sometimes forgotten that, although God has a vocation and a work for each

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one of us to do, we are none of us indispensable to God. We depend upon Him, but He does not depend upon us. We have no grounds for the assumption, so confidently made, that either the activities of our own generation or the continuance, upon anything like its present lines, of our modern civilisation is *essential* to the fulfilment of God's purpose for the world. Civilisations have perished before now, and it is at least possible that the coming of Christ to the world-civilisation to which we belong may be a coming in judgment—by cataclysm and overthrow, rather than by development and evolutionary fulfilment. It is at least doubtful whether civilisation could survive the effects of another world-war. There is no valid guarantee that a new Armageddon of the nations will never take place. The question is asked in the Gospels, 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?'¹ It is implied that the answer to the question is doubtful; what is *not* regarded as doubtful is the fact of His Coming.

The truth is that if Christianity is comparable to an ellipse, its two foci are not, as Ritschl asserted, Justification by Faith and the Kingdom of God: they are time and eternity. 'Their existence is on earth,' writes the author of the Epistle to Diognetus with reference to Christians, 'but their citizenship is in heaven.'² It is fatal to eliminate from Christianity the element of otherworldliness, which alone can in the last resort give abiding signi-

¹ Luke xviii. 8.

² ἐπὶ γῆς διατρίβουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐν οὐρανῷ πολιτεύονται (*Auctor ad Diognet.* v. 9).

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ficance and value to the life that now is, or to the transient activities of the fleeting generations of mankind. The Christianity of the past has been accused—with some exaggeration—of having been so pre-occupied with the life to come as to have been rendered unmindful of the immediate duties of life here ; it can hardly be denied that in the Protestantism of to-day, despite the so obvious truth of the saying that ' we have here no continuing city,' there is but little seeking after the City that is to come.

In a word, modern Protestantism, forgetting the significance of the contrast in the Gospels between Martha and Mary, has tended so thoroughly to subordinate the life of contemplation and prayer to the life of activity, that the life of activity itself is in danger of becoming fussy and shallow. It has so emphasised the truth of the saying *laborare est orare* that it has largely forgotten the complementary truth that *orare est laborare*. Work and prayer—it may well be that specialists as well as general practitioners are needed in both. It is impossible to estimate the spiritual loss to the religious life of Protestantism which has resulted from the failure any longer to recognise that the vocation might come to a man to devote his whole life, in monastic contemplation and prayer, to the single task of bearing witness, in the midst of a world preoccupied overmuch with the things that are pleasurable and seen, to the overmastering reality of the things not seen and eternal. A small book recently published by the Student Christian Movement in Great Britain was described on the cover as ' a book which seeks

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to bridge the gulf between the cloister and the market-place.' The aim is excellent ; but before you can bridge the gulf between the cloister and the market-place, you must first of all have not merely a market-place but a cloister. The attitude of the typically Protestant mind towards the ideal of the Religious Life in the technical sense is still, it is to be feared, as devoid of any real understanding as that of Dr. Johnson, who is reported by Boswell as having remarked that 'if convents should be allowed at all, they should only be retreats for persons unable to serve the publick, or who have served it. . . . A youthful passion for abstracted devotion should not be encouraged.'¹ Against this I would set some words of the late Father George Tyrrell, viz. : ' If to be a " liberal " is to be a utilitarian of the vulgarest type : if it is to have a contempt for anything that savours of mysticism, or that cannot be rationalised or made " common sense," if it is to declaim against the Religious state : to censure the hidden service of Contemplative Orders as wasted, as something better given to the poor . . . if this is to be liberal and broad, then be our soul with the narrow-minded and let our last end be like his ! ' ² ' The view of some Protestants,' writes Harnack, ' that Christianity can be transformed into a religion of this world, is an illusion.' ³

The part played by the practice of *worship* in

¹ Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (' Everyman ' Edition, vol. i. p. 316).

² I have not been able to verify the exact source of this quotation.

³ Harnack, *History of Dogma* [E.T.], vol. v. p. 91.

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modern Protestantism is difficult to estimate. It is obvious that what is described as the 'habit of public worship' is declining, and that the decline is due in part to the failure of many 'religiously minded' Protestants to find any place in their scheme of religion for the regular practice of worship, in part also to the unsatisfactory character of the type of worship which Protestantism normally provides. Judged by Catholic standards, the part played by worship in Protestant practice is in any case small, and the element of what Professor Pratt distinguishes as 'objective' worship shows a tendency to diminish.¹ Broadly speaking, it is the case that whereas the main orientation of a Catholic service is towards the worship of God, the main orientation of a Protestant service is towards the edification of the worshippers. Both the reading

¹ J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 290-309. Pratt defines 'objective' worship as that which 'aims at making some kind of effect upon the Deity, or in some way communicating with Him,' 'subjective' worship as that which 'seeks only to induce some desired mood or belief or attitude in the mind of the worshipper.' He regards the former as characteristic of Catholicism, the latter of Protestantism. It is obvious that the definition given of 'objective' worship is crudely worded, and also that the distinction itself between 'objective' and 'subjective' worship is only a rough one. The *original* intention of certain elements in Protestant worship—e.g., prayer and praise—was thoroughly 'objective,' and it still is so wherever faith in the reality of God and in His responsiveness to prayer is still living. It is important to notice from a psychological point of view that 'objective' methods of worship have valuable 'subjective' effects, which, however, are largely dependent on the fact that they are not sought for their own sake, but that the worship is believed to have an objective value and reference. The purely 'subjective' effects, for example, of prayer are analogous to those of auto-suggestion; but if prayer is consciously and deliberately reduced to a form of auto-suggestion, it ceases to be prayer. On Pratt's distinction see R. H. Thouless, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, pp. 159 *sqq.*

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of the Scriptures and also the sermon are of course addressed directly to them, and it is to be feared that occasionally the same is true also, indirectly, of the prayers. Professor Pratt quotes a contributor to the *Atlantic Monthly* for October 1911 as writing with reference presumably to Protestant worship in America—doubtless with some exaggeration—‘The people no longer pray but listen to the minister as he prays. Worship has become a passive matter. The congregation has become an audience—a body of listeners.’¹ Wherever the primary purpose of attendance at church is considered to be the edification of the worshippers, it is not surprising that in cases in which they do not find themselves consciously edified, they cease to attend. The great Protestant preachers both of the past and of the present have made of the sermon, which in practice even more than in theory tends to dominate the worship of Protestantism, a real means of grace to their hearers : but preachers of genius are necessarily few. It is a trite criticism to say that Protestant worship is too dependent upon the personality of the minister, and that in some cases it manifestly fails to be worship at all.

Nevertheless, no system of worship can be anything but a meaningless form apart from the presence and power of the Spirit of God ; and in cases in which there is a real atmosphere of worship, the simplicity of the typical Protestant service has a beauty of its own. The congregation sits listening to the words of the Bible, and subsequently to the words of the preacher. There is prayer and there

¹ G. P. Atwater, quoted by Pratt, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-304.

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is praise, and there is very often conscious communion with God. The prayer, however, is as a rule almost wholly the prayer of petition and thanksgiving: there is little or no element either of mysticism or of mystery in the worship, and there is little, if any, direct *adoration* of God. I think that Protestants are wrong in maintaining that bodily posture is a matter of complete spiritual indifference; we are creatures of body and spirit, and the posture of sitting or stooping, if adopted for prayer, really operates, I think, as a hindrance to the rendering of direct adoration to God.

Of special interest, and deserving of particular notice, is the mode of worship practised by the Society of Friends. Aiming at formlessness, the Friends in effect have elaborated a form of their own. The Quaker 'Fellowship of Silence,' which may or may not be broken as individuals are moved by the Spirit, is a deliberate and corporate act of waiting upon God, of communion with the Eternal, a seeking of rest and refreshment and spiritual strength with which to confront anew the tasks of the workaday world. It is to their habit of thus practising the prayer of Contemplation or of Quiet, whether individually in the privacy of their inner chambers, or jointly with others in the corporate meetings of their fellowship, that Quakers may be presumed to owe the peculiar serenity and restfulness, the aroma, as it were, of the peace which passeth understanding, which so frequently and so conspicuously marks their characters. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that the Quaker Meeting and the Quaker waiting upon God are both essentially and

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severely practical in aim. There is as a rule no sympathy with the ideal of the contemplative life, or with the idea of contemplation as an end in itself. Communion with God is commended and practised, not as an end but as a means: and the end of all communion with God, on the Quaker theory of the matter, is the service of man. The first of the two great Commandments in which our Lord summarised the Law and the Prophets is subordinated to the second. Here, too, the idea of *adoration*, as of a worship due to Almighty God as such, a worship freely rendered by the creature to the Creator, at once as his highest duty and his supremest joy, appears to be wholly or almost wholly lacking. Professor Pratt suggests that the needed 'objectivity' may be restored to Protestant worship by the giving of greater prominence in the services to the element of prayer, accompanied by careful teaching and training, such as at present is seldom given, in the theory as well as the practice of prayer and of meditation.¹ It is probable that something might actually be accomplished along these lines; but it is more probable still that in regard to the theory and practice of 'objective' worship Protestantism will have to sit frankly at the feet of the Catholic tradition. I do not personally believe that it will prove possible for Protestants to recover fully the idea of adoration in their religion, except on the basis of a revival of sacramentalism on Catholic lines.

The present place of the sacraments in Protestant practice is of course thoroughly subordinate. The

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 307-308.

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Lord's Supper is observed (save by Quakers), though at somewhat infrequent intervals, as a solemn and sacred memorial of Jesus, a fellowship-feast of believers. A Real Presence is sometimes asserted, but it is not regarded as being mediated specifically by the consecration of the elements: it is rather regarded as being inherent in the service as a whole, which has the effect of intensifying the believers' realisation of their oneness with Jesus and of His spiritual presence in their midst. There is usually no thought of any specifically sacramental mediation of grace: it is rather the spiritual suggestiveness of the service as a whole that is valued. Here, again, it is significant that the elements are received by the worshippers sitting. The Eucharist is not normally thought of as being in principle a feeding of the multitudes, but rather as a touching observance in which fellowships and groups of devout people occasionally indulge. There are, of course, variations both of doctrine and of practice with regard to it, but the extreme terror which still obtains in the most typically Protestant circles of any approach to the Catholic interpretation of the sacraments makes it exceedingly difficult for any very coherent theory of Holy Communion to be worked out. It is a piece of suggestive symbolism which is regarded as having been instituted by Jesus and which commemorates His Death. As such it appeals to certain temperaments very strongly indeed, but it tends, on the whole, to be regarded as an optional appendage to the Protestant Religion.

If we disregard for the moment those circles in which the old-fashioned orthodoxy, which has not

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made its reckoning with the spirit of Modernism, is still more or less in possession, and if we discount the natural and temperamental piety of devout individuals, it is easy to think of modern Protestantism, regarded as a religion, as being virtually sick unto death. The process of reducing Christianity to its lowest terms is suspiciously like peeling the onion till nothing is left. Matthew Arnold's famous definition of religion as 'morality touched with emotion' is not an untrue description of much that passes for Christianity in the eyes of the man in the street. There are wide circles in which much more than this is alive, but there is widespread deficiency of intellectual grip as well as of definite and disciplined devotional practice. The habits of solitary prayer, of devotional meditation upon the Bible, and of Puritan austerity of life, which, apart from the hearing of sermons in church, formed the really effective basis of spiritual life in the older-fashioned Protestantism, appear to be fast dying out in the mass of the people. The revelations as to the extreme religious vagueness and ignorance of the ordinary man with regard to the simplest tenets of Christianity, which were disclosed as the result of the enquiries which were instituted both in England and in America into the religious outlook of the troops during the late war, can have been no surprise to persons of discernment. The modern Protestant world is hard hit by intellectual questionings, and with its individualistic repudiation of authority, and its virtual insistence that each man must find truth for himself, it is hard for it to offer to individuals the guidance they need, or to proclaim

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any Gospel with power. There is an interesting passage in Dr. Adams Brown's survey, *The Church in America*.

In many a Roman Catholic church you will find [he writes] a little rack at the front door in which is placed a plentiful supply of pamphlets setting forth in clear and simple language the teaching of the Church. . . . Anyone who reads these pamphlets will learn what the Roman Church teaches on the subjects which are regarded as most important in religion. The Protestant layman will find no similar means of information in the average Protestant church, and the lack of definite text-book instruction is seldom supplemented by any clear-cut teaching from the pulpit. Doctrinal preaching has fallen out of fashion, and expository preaching of the old-fashioned kind which took a book of the Bible for its subject and led the hearer step by step through its argument is a forgotten art. Whereas Protestantism began by aiding the layman to understand the doctrines and precepts of the Christian religion, while the Roman Church deliberately fostered his ignorance, to-day all this is reversed. It is the Roman Church which provides instruction in religion for its laymen. The Protestant Church too often leaves its members to pick up for themselves such knowledge as they can.¹

But if the Protestant Church thus fails to provide its laymen with teaching, the reason, it may be surmised, is at least partly that in those circles in which the reaction against the idea of authority in religion has gone farthest, the would-be teacher is at a loss to know precisely what definite teaching to give. Intellectually Protestantism has passed through such a chameleon-like history and has discarded so much of its earlier dogmatic, that it

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 289.

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is not surprising that many Protestants should now be exceedingly shy of making dogmatic affirmations at all. In particular, the extreme desire of what on the whole is the most influential and positive of modern Protestant schools of theology to avoid making any theological affirmations which involve metaphysics has the effect of throwing many modern teachers of religion more and more into the arms of the psychologists.

The study of psychology is capable of throwing a great deal of light on the reaction of man, or of particular men, towards the objects, if any, of man's religious belief, and upon the effects upon character and life of particular practices traditionally bound up with religion. But the study of human psychology, as such, can never be anything more than the study of human psychology. It can establish the existence in man of religious impulses and instincts, if that required demonstration, but it can never establish the truth of any particular religion, though it can exhibit the congruity of religion in general with human nature in general, and on the most optimistic view may exhibit the congruity of the Christian religion with the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. But the hunger of the human soul is for reality and truth, and neither reality nor truth, in a philosophical or theological sense, can be established on the basis of psychology. What psychology can do is to provide a convenient hypothetical explanation of error ; and accordingly an explanation is commonly sought along psychological lines for any deeply rooted religious belief which a given writer regards as erroneous. Thus,

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for example, in a book recently published by the Student Christian Movement in Great Britain it is maintained that the whole eschatological outlook of Judaism and early Christianity is of the nature of a 'compensating fantasy' elaborated by an oppressed nation which subconsciously desired to be avenged of its oppressors, whom it naïvely identified with the enemies of God, and that, despite the Gospels, such an outlook was wholly alien to the mind of the Jesus of history, from the record of whose teaching the eschatology must in consequence be eliminated as a wholly unauthentic accretion.¹ The argument is a dangerous one; inasmuch as the conception which the authors retain of a God whose character is to be interpreted wholly in terms of sheer benevolence, to the exclusion of any element of righteous indignation or 'wrath' against sin, might be explained by a psychologist, with about equal plausibility, as itself only a 'compensating fantasy' subconsciously elaborated and 'projected' by the human spirit into the region of the ideal as a consoling refuge from the hard realities of life; indeed, such an explanation of religion has already been suggested by certain writers of the fashionable Freudian school. An account, even if true, of the psychological processes by which religious beliefs are in particular cases attained, or even of their psychological function in the actual lives of the persons who accept them, can never of itself constitute evidence either for or against the alleged truth

¹ The reference is to *The Lord of Thought*, by Miss Lily Dougall and the late Rev. C. W. Emmet, whose lamented death is a grievous loss to English theological scholarship.

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or falsehood of the affirmations, implicit or explicit, involved by the beliefs in question with regard to the nature of Reality. Unfortunately it is as fatally easy for some thinkers to discover in the speculations of recent psychology a basis on which to explain away as illusory the alleged truths of religious belief, as it appears to be for others to discover in the same speculations a justification for engaging in the practice of religion without coming seriously to grips with the intellectual question of truth.

The closing chapter in Troeltsch's *Protestantism and Progress* is headed significantly 'Protestantism and Modern Religious *Feeling*.' Earlier in the book he had pointed out that the spirit of emancipation and free enquiry and criticism which characterises the modern world and is the presupposition of its 'progress' is not due originally to Protestantism, as such, in its original forms. It is due in part to the impulses which came from the Renaissance and in part to the virtual triumph of the principles of the 'sects' over those of the 'churches.' It was only towards the close of the seventeenth century that critical theology, combined with an exaltation of the immediacy of the personal religious consciousness of the individual, began to prevail, and has prevailed more and more in the Protestant world: only in quite recent times has the revolt against authority been carried to its ultimate issues in the religious individualism of to-day. Troeltsch speaks of 'an immediacy of the religious consciousness which turns the historical element into a mere means of self-stimulation' and of 'a subjectivism which makes little of cultus, ceremonial, and eccle-

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siasticism ' as having broken in irresistibly on the Protestant Churches like a flood sweeping old landmarks away, and remarks that the idea of faith has triumphed over the content of faith, and only escapes weakness and sentimentality because, when all is said and done, the iron of the Protestant conception of faith rings through.¹

It is not always certain that the iron of the Protestant conception of faith does ring through, in the cases in which the idea of faith has triumphed over its content. Faith in faith would appear to be a very inadequate substitute for faith in the reality of God. In another passage the same writer refers with approval to the famous saying attributed to Lessing : ' If God were to offer me in one hand the immutable truth and in the other the search after truth, I should say in all humility, " Lord, keep the absolute truth : it is not suited to me. Leave to me only the power and the desire to seek for it, though I never find it wholly and definitively " '—an idea which is put in an even more extreme form by George Meredith, when he writes that ' You must dig for it : you never reach anything, but the eternal digging constitutes the object gained.' The saying of Lessing stands certainly at the opposite pole from that of the rigidly absolute dogmatism of Rome. Troeltsch, who regards it as giving a typical characterisation of modern religious feeling, remarks that Protestantism has become ' the religion of the search for God in one's own feeling, experience, thought and will.' ² It is perhaps natural that in a scientific age the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 199.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 197-198.

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ideal of the search after truth characteristic of science should have been transferred to the sphere of religion, and Pascal is perhaps right when he writes that there are two attitudes, and two only, which are worthy of a reasonable man—either to serve God with his whole heart, because he knows Him, or to seek Him with his whole heart, because he knows Him not.¹ Nevertheless it is quite certain that Christianity came originally into the world not as the religion of the search of man for God, but as the religion of the search of God for man. Earlier in these lectures the point was made that it was characteristic of the first preachers of the Gospel that they were men who claimed to have found.² They were assured that they had found the living and true God, not primarily in their own ‘feeling, experience, thought and will,’ but in Jesus Christ and in the communion of His Spirit. They had found Him, because they had first been found of Him. They had been ‘as sheep going astray’; they were now ‘returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.’ They had the assurance that they were ‘in Him that is true’: and therefore they spoke with authority a message which (in the phrase of S. Paul) was proclaimed ‘in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’

We are thus brought up afresh against the problem of our first lecture—the problem of how to combine the authority of Revelation with the claims

¹ ‘Il n’y a que deux sortes de personnes qu’on puisse appeler raisonnables : ou ceux qui servent Dieu de tout leur cœur, parce qu’ils le connaissent ; ou ceux qui le cherchent de tout leur cœur, parce qu’ils ne le connaissent pas.’ (Pascal, *Pensées*.)

² P. 23, *supra*.

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of moral, intellectual, and spiritual freedom. What appears clear is that just as we saw no hope of remedy for the spiritual sickness of the modern world in a *régime* of Authority without Freedom, so neither is there any solution of our problems to be found in a mere insistence upon Freedom without Authority. There is need of the authority of corporate historical tradition—the tested and criticised experience of the past. There is need, in an even more vital sense, of the authority of Revelation.

CHAPTER V

THE AUTHORITY OF REVELATION

THE term *Revelation*, to any one familiar with traditional religious language, is wont to suggest one or other of two antitheses. It suggests either an opposition, real or supposed, between Revelation and Reason; or else it suggests an opposition or contrast between Religion as 'Natural' and Religion as 'Revealed.' Both these antitheses have in recent years been criticised in an illuminating fashion by Mr. Clement Webb, the Oriel Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford, upon whose discussion of them much of what I have to say in this lecture has been based.¹

It was maintained in the eighteenth century, both by the so-called Deists and by their orthodox opponents, that there were certain truths of Religion—and those the most important—at which man could arrive, and in fact did arrive, as the phrase went, 'by the light of Nature,' without any need for a Revelation. Rational reflection upon the

¹ C. C. J. Webb, *Problems in the Relations of God and Man* (Nisbet, 1911). My obligations to this book in the earlier part of what follows are as great as is my indebtedness to Troeltsch's *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte* in the later part.

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world and its order and beauty was supposed to justify the inference to its creation by a good and wise God, who must therefore be assumed to exist. Rational reflection upon the data of human nature and the fact of conscience was supposed to justify the inferences that man stood in relation to a Moral Governor to whom he was responsible, that the will was free, that duty was obligatory, and that the soul (as many were prepared to add) was immortal. These truths, it was held, of God, Freedom, and Immortality formed the content of what was described as 'Natural Religion,' and were supposed to be universally accepted—at least in general, and among the higher races of mankind. No special revelation was required to establish their truth, and they tended to be regarded as the common substratum of the various religions of mankind. In so far as the specific doctrines of a particular religion (for example, Christianity), which claimed to be a product of 'Revelation,' went beyond the so-called truths of Natural Religion (i.e. did more than simply reaffirm them), they were regarded by their champions as essentially supplementary to these truths, and by their opponents as unnecessary or even as mischievous. Both sides, that is to say, in the Deist controversy were agreed in regarding certain truths of religion as *discoverable* by man, independently of any process of Divine Revelation. The further tenets of 'Revealed' Religion tended to be regarded even by those who maintained their credibility and importance, as being essentially a superstructure built upon these foundations.

To-day it is clear that the whole point of view

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which I have just indicated is in large measure obsolete. We do not now speak of 'the Religion of Nature,' nor do we pretend that the tenets which once were comprised under such a description are either universally held or generally admitted: they are as much in dispute as are any other dogmas of religion or of ethics. Nor are they common, in anything like the same sense, to all the great religions of the world. Still less are they 'as old as the Creation,' if by that phrase it is intended to suggest that they formed part of the religious outlook of primitive man. Manifestly they did not. The savage believes, not in God, but in gods. His beliefs about immortality, even though it be granted that he commonly entertains such beliefs, are not as a rule of a very attractive or lofty kind. And his morality is that of his tribe, regulated by tribal custom and *taboo*. The savage is very far from speculating, in the manner of an eighteenth-century thinker, on the subjects of conscience and its obligations, or of his own relationship and responsibility towards 'the Moral Governor of the Universe.'

Two things in particular have made it difficult for educated persons to-day to draw the kind of distinction which used to be drawn between 'Revealed' and 'Natural' Religion, viz: (1) The idea of evolution, which has vaguely but powerfully affected men's way of regarding things, even in respect of matters widely remote from the strictly biological context in which it was applied by Charles Darwin, and (2) the results of modern scientific study of the subject of Comparative Religion. The latter study, vigorously pursued since the publication

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in 1871 of Sir E. B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, has made it evident that many of those characteristic doctrines and practices of Judaism and Christianity, which in the eighteenth century were regarded as peculiar to their supposed or actual content as 'revealed,' are not in fact unique in respect of kind, but present obvious analogies to parallel beliefs and practices in other religions. Thus (to take instances) Hebrew sacrifice is now studied and interpreted by reference to the analogies presented by the sacrificial rites and customs of other Semitic peoples and of primitive races generally: the cosmology and mythology of Genesis and other portions of the Old Testament are compared and contrasted with those of the Babylonians, from which it is probable that they are ultimately derived, or with Persian beliefs, by which it is probable that Judaism in its later phases was influenced: the sacraments of Catholic Christianity are studied in relation to the sacramental rites of ancient 'mystery' religions: analogies are sought in neo-Platonism and elsewhere for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity: and an Oxford teacher—the late Mr. J. L. Johnston—published, shortly before the war, as a contribution to Christian apologetics, a work bearing the title *Some Alternatives to Jesus Christ: A Comparative Study of Faiths in Divine Incarnation*.

It is, moreover, evident, when the religion of the Hebrews, of which Christianity has always claimed to be the culmination, is thus comparatively and historically studied, that the process of religious and national experience of which the

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Biblical writings of the Old Testament are the literary deposit is capable of being interpreted as a 'development,' and a development from very crude beginnings. The religion of the original Hebrew tribes who invaded and conquered Canaan, whatever the precise extent of its debt to the creative spiritual impulse given to it through what may be supposed to have been the historical work of Moses, clearly resembled in all or most of its external features the religions of their Semitic neighbours; and it is not easy to say, except by reference to the growing divergence between the religion of Israel and that of its neighbours in the *later* stages of their history, wherein precisely the differences between them lay. Certainly between the religious ideas of the Book of Judges and those of the most deeply spiritual of the Psalms there is a wide divergence in respect of content, and there is reason to suppose that many centuries had elapsed in respect of time. It is at least tempting to speak in such a connexion of 'religious development' or even of 'religious evolution,' and to interpret the development of religious ideas among the Hebrews as being simply part and parcel of a general process, more vaguely conceived, but denoted by such phrases as 'the evolution of the religious idea' or 'the development of the religious consciousness of mankind.'

In other words, the various actual religions of mankind, when studied comparatively, are seen to present such analogies as to appear all of one piece: and in some instances at least their history appears capable of interpretation in terms of the fashionable categories of 'development' and 'evo-

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lution.' On the other hand, the doctrines of what in the eighteenth century was called 'Natural Religion' are not, in actual fact, discovered to be either universal or original in human religion. They are (to use a phrase of Professor Webb's) 'large generalisations' of a somewhat abstract character, which are attained, if at all, comparatively rarely, and at a comparatively late stage of religious history. No doubt as abstract principles they are implicit in one sense or another in more religions than one, and indeed in most (though not in all) of the higher religions. But they do not, as such, form the really vital content, at any stage, of the actual religious faith and practice of mankind, in so far as mankind is religious. As formulated by the thinkers of the eighteenth century they are essentially abstractions, the products of reflection in the study.

If the effect of what may broadly be called the modern way of looking at the problems of religion is thus in a sense to render obsolete the distinction formerly drawn between Religion as 'Natural' and Religion as 'Revealed,' the closely related antithesis between Revelation and Reason, if it cannot be said to have been rendered unmeaning, is in need of restatement on lines which involve a decidedly altered conception of the mutual relations between its terms. Here again, in the past it has been usual to think of two stages, two departments of truth, as it were, in the sphere of religion. To a knowledge of the existence of God, and of His character up to a point, it has been held that man is capable of attaining for himself, by the use of his

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reason. Revelation has been regarded as coming in to supplement such a rational knowledge of God by a further and fuller disclosure. It has been held that God communicated directly to man by Revelation certain higher supplementary truths which he could not have discovered for himself, but which he can recognise as true when once they have been made known to him : certain truths which, at the least, it is his duty to accept on the authority of God, who by whatever agency (prophet or inspired teacher, His own Incarnate Son, or the authoritative teaching of His Church) reveals or propounds them for his acceptance. There have been various ways of putting this latter conception : different theologians, or classes of theologians, have varied in their conception of the attitude of Reason towards the content of Revelation when once it has been disclosed. It has never, I think, been maintained or suggested by responsible Christian thinkers that the content of Revelation was irrational, was *contrary* to Reason. It has been maintained by some theologians that the revealed truths of Christianity are *above* Reason, in the sense that they are not merely beyond the scope of Reason to discover, but beyond the scope of Reason to criticise. The general tradition of Christian theology, however, has been to assert the claim of Christianity to be rational through and through : to maintain that the truths of Revelation are themselves inherently rational ; not indeed in the sense that they can be so completely rationalised and comprehended by the mind as to leave no element of mystery remaining ; but in the sense that the mind is capable

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of perceiving and of appreciating in some real degree their rational character when once they have been made known, though quite incapable of having discovered them for itself.

Now, with regard to this whole way of putting the matter, Professor Webb, while pointing out with Bishop Butler that Reason is the only possible judge of Revelation—for (as he puts it) ‘ I must have some *reason* (even if not a good one) for accepting the Revelation as genuine ’—and that therefore ‘ Reason cannot possibly be confined to a sphere distinct from that of Revelation,’ is mainly concerned to attack the idea that there can possibly exist any knowledge of God at all which is not ‘ revealed ’ knowledge. He points out that it is only ‘ so long as we do not, strictly speaking, *think* about it, but only *picture* it,’ that this doctrine of a twofold knowledge of God, ‘ a knowledge partly based on Reason from within us, partly upon Revelation imparted to us from without,’ has any plausibility. We can imagine ourselves getting to know about the existence of a fellow human being, endeavouring to infer his motives and character from a study of his observed actions, and so forth ; and the man meanwhile, so far from desiring to reveal himself, may be actively attempting to conceal himself. Anything we get to know about him may be discovered by us either against his will or without his co-operation. Even so, we shall be working more or less in the dark, until we actually meet the man himself, and ‘ he tells us what he means, and what he is aiming at.’ Thus even when it is a case of getting to know a fellow human being, we can

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only know *about* him, we cannot really know *him*, until he is willing to reveal himself to us and to 'give himself away,' in the self-disclosure of actual personal intercourse. Nevertheless, in the case of a fellow man there is a sense in which it is or may be possible to know something about him, and by inference to conjecture his character and motives, by rational investigation, quite apart from any self-revelation on his part. In the case of God, however, this cannot be supposed. As Professor Webb expresses it, 'we could not allow the name of God to a being on whose privacy an Actæon could intrude, or whose secrets a Prometheus could snatch from him without his assent.' In the case of God, any knowledge of Him at all must be revealed knowledge. No man can by searching find out God, save in so far as God is Himself willing to disclose Himself to man. 'The view, then,' the Professor writes, 'of Reason and Revelation as independent sources of religious truth—truth, that is, about God—with distinct spheres, has been found unsatisfactory. What Reason reaches cannot be regarded as unrevealed, since it cannot be thought of as discovered without the co-operation of God, nor can the contents of Revelation be thought of as discerned or recognised otherwise than by Reason. . . . We were brought to regard the two, Reason and Revelation, as in Religion correlative, Reason being the apprehension of Revelation, Revelation the substance and content of Reason.' ¹

It follows that the antithesis between Reason and Revelation, regarded as distinct and separate

¹ C. C. J. Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 48.

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sources of religious knowledge, disappears, and with it the distinction, in anything like the traditional sense, between Religion as Natural and Religion as Revealed. All religion whatsoever, in so far as it involves a knowledge or apprehension of God, must, in proportion as we assume its truth, be regarded as being revealed. Man's discovery of God, if it is in any sense what it claims to be (i.e. if it is not illusory) is only possible or only conceivable on the assumption that it is more truly to be regarded as a Divine self-disclosure, as God's revelation of Himself to man. *Whatever is of spiritual truth or value in any form of human religion whatsoever comes from God, and is a product of Revelation.* It will be observed that this negatives the Ritschlian attempt to treat the Jesus of history as the sole medium of Revelation. Unless the paradox be maintained that there is no knowledge of God anywhere, apart from Christianity, other media of Revelation must be recognised than that of the Gospel.

Meanwhile it is worth noticing that the argument implies a particular conception of the nature of the truth which in any process of Divine Revelation is revealed. It is assumed that what is revealed is the knowledge of God. The whole process of the argument depends on its major premiss, viz., the impossibility of getting to know God against His will. If religious knowledge is essentially the knowledge of God—if that is its primary and proper content—then the process of Divine Revelation is comparable to the self-disclosure of a Personality. What is revealed is essentially the knowledge, if

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not of a Person, at least of a Being in whom personality may be said to be inherent and with whom finite persons can stand in personal relations¹: it is not information, miraculously communicated, about matters of fact. The weakness of the older doctrines of Revelation was that they tended to conceive of the revelational process as consisting in the communication of *information*--information about matters of science or of history, information about God, in the sense of particular intellectual *doctrines* about Him. The result was that for long periods the science, the history, and the theology of the Bible and of the official Church came to be invested in men's minds with the attributes of infallibility and miraculous inerrancy. Hence the ensuing shock and disturbance of faith when a generation ago it was discovered, upon a comparison, that Biblical history, as such, was no more (if no less) trustworthy than that of other ancient historical sources, and that its historical value required to be tested and sifted, from the point of view of the historian, by methods analogous to those employed in dealing (for example) with Herodotus or Thucydides; that Biblical science was similarly of a piece with the outlook upon the natural order

¹ It has been pointed out by Professor Webb that traditional Christian theology, while affirming a doctrine of Personality *in* God, has on the whole preferred to avoid such expressions as 'the Personality of God.' What has been maintained is rather that the Divine Being is self-disclosed in personal relationships, and that reciprocal communion of a personal kind takes place between God and man. Historically the doctrine that God is 'a Person' was first advanced by Socinus and his followers in the interests of Unitarianism, and presents grave difficulties on the ground of its unqualified anthropomorphism. (Cf. C. C. J. Webb, *God and Personality*, chap. iii.)

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which was common to ancient peoples in general and to the Babylonians in particular; and that the categories of Biblical and ecclesiastical thought required equally to be studied comparatively, i.e. in relation to the world of ideas of contemporary writers, whether sacred or profane.

These particular difficulties, which caused trouble to our grandfathers, or perhaps even to our fathers, it may be claimed that the newer view of Revelation enables us successfully to overcome. Meanwhile there remains for consideration the urgent issue of the relation of the revelation of God in Christ to the parallel and competing claims to be true revelations of God which are made for themselves by the other great historical religions of mankind. This question of Comparative Religion is one which may be said to press with peculiar urgency upon our generation. As we have already implied, it is clearly impossible to claim genuineness for the spiritual life as manifested in Christianity, and at the same time to declare it illusory wherever it is manifested apart from Christianity. We are required by our general principles to allow that in religion generally, and certainly in all the higher religions of mankind, there is involved some measure of genuine knowledge of God, and by consequence some measure of Revelation. 'God left not Himself without witness.' The Divine Light 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' In what sense, then, if in any, can it be claimed for the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that it is the absolute and final revelation? Can it be justly claimed for Christianity that it is the climax of all Divine self-revelation, the

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fulfilment which partly completes and partly corrects the half-lights of pagan faiths ?

The question is one which has been elaborately discussed by Troeltsch,¹ who points out that Christianity, like all great spiritual movements, is fundamentally characterised by a naïve confidence in its own normative truth ; but that the first result of the emergence of a genuinely historical world-view is that Christianity, like every other system of cultural values the history of which can be traced, is contemplated primarily as an historical object, side by side with others in the general history of the world. The effect of so regarding it, in the minds of many persons, is to give rise to an unbounded historical relativism which issues only in fundamental scepticism ; that is to say, all religions appear to be more or less true in relation to their particular historical and cultural setting, none appears utterly trustworthy, and there is a reluctance to regard any particular one as being in an absolute sense truer than the rest.

The theological thinkers of Germany have been wrestling for a generation or more with the problem thus presented. After the break-down of the original apologetic which merely isolated Christianity from its historical context, regarding it 'as standing in history but not as arising out of history,' the attempt was made to defend Christianity on the basis of a theory of development as being the eventual realisation in history of the 'absolute idea' of Religion. The difficulty confronting this

¹ *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1912).

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theory is the fact that history, as actually studied and known, is not found to conform to the requirements of the Hegelian dialectic ; that is to say, it is not in actual fact immediately and empirically interpretable as the logical development of an 'Absolute Idea.' Moreover, if such a scheme of interpretation were actually applicable to history as a whole, it would be natural to look for the absolute development at the end of the time-process (if the time-process is rightly to be regarded as having an end), rather than in a religion which reaches us, as Christianity does, as part of our inheritance from what is already a relatively remote past.

Troeltsch distinguishes two forms of the attempt to establish the relation of Christianity to non-Christian religions as being that of absolute to relative truth, viz. : (1) that of the *orthodox-supernaturalist* school, which bases the distinctiveness of Christianity upon its *form* as supernaturally miraculous Revelation ; a position which really involves harking back to the pre-comparative point of view for which absoluteness means simply a claim to exclusive supernaturalism ; and (2) the *evolutionary* school, which attempts to interpret the *content* of Christianity as constituting the realisation of the idea of Religion as such, a good example of which is afforded by the remark of Harnack 'that the Gospel is in no wise a positive religion like the rest : that it contains no statutory or particularistic elements ; *that it is, therefore, Religion itself.*'¹

Both these positions are criticised by Troeltsch

¹ Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (E. T., Williams and Norgate, 1901), p. 63.

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with damaging effect. They require to be sharply distinguished from one another, and cannot be combined. The numerous mediating schools only make use of their ideas in a weakened form without having really thought them out. For many, indeed, the 'absoluteness' of Christianity means only its own *claim* to be absolute. Troeltsch pours fine scorn upon this theology based merely upon the claim made for itself by a particular religion, this *Anspruchstheologie*, which appears to regard itself as absolved from any obligation to take seriously the parallel and competing claims of other and alternative systems of religion.

The upshot of the discussion, thus far, is to establish the necessity for recognising that Christianity, because and in so far as it is historical, is (if any one likes to call it so) a 'relative' phenomenon. The sphere of absolute truth and of absolute value, changeless and wholly unconditioned by what is temporary and transient, is not to be sought in the realm of history, but in that which lies beyond history—in *dem Jenseits der Geschichte*—as Religion itself affirms: 'We know in part and we prophesy in part'; only 'when that which is perfect is come' shall 'that which is in part' be 'done away.'¹ But it does not at all follow from this that we are condemned to the sheer scepticism exhibited by the type of historical relativists who, in Troeltsch's phrase, in the name of historical impartiality not only allow their sun to shine equally on the just and on the unjust, but refuse any longer to recognise the difference between them. The very

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 9-10.

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fact that it is possible hypothetically to enter into the experience of other epochs or of alien civilisations and sympathetically to understand them is an evidence that the individual man is in some sense a kind of microcosm of humanity. Human nature, in other words, is fundamentally the same throughout all known periods of human history and in all the various races of mankind. The divergent spiritual value-constructions of mankind have, despite their divergence, elements in common. There is therefore the possibility of a basis or standard of comparison; and we are, in point of fact, impelled as by an inner necessity to institute comparisons and to weigh them against each other, and on the ground of our resulting convictions to estimate them by a comparative standard of judgment.

It is to be observed, further, that in respect of all the higher spiritual values—in art and philosophy, for example, as well as in religion—we are dependent upon the great discoverers, the relatively few pioneers, the historical masters.

Those [remarks Troeltsch] who have anything genuinely new to say to mankind have been singularly few, and it is astonishing how limited is the number of fundamental thoughts which have nourished man's spiritual life. In the matter of the history of Religion, we have not to do with a vast plurality of mighty religious forces, between which the task of decision and choice would be endless, but only with a limited number of great constructions. Polytheism and the multiform cults of uncivilised peoples need not be considered seriously from our present point of view. The great ethical and spiritual religions which open

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out a world of higher reality over against the merely natural life of man are only a few in number. Practically they are reducible to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all springing from a common root—and over against these the great Oriental religions, Brahmanism and Buddhism.

Side by side with these we have the philosophical attempts at a purely rational religion, the starting-points of which are invariably the foundations laid by one of the great historical religions, but which have broken away from their starting-points. The fundamental types here too are few, viz.: monistic pantheism, dualistic mysticism, and moralistic theism. It is a question either of the great process of ethico-religious speculation which in the ancient world began with Platonism, or else of the religious philosophy of India and its modern revivals. It is to be observed, however, that these so-called 'rational' religions are, as already remarked, invariably off-shoots of the 'historical-positive' religions, and that their intellectual refinement is purchased at the cost of the loss of inner religious energy and power.¹

The philosophy of religion, in other words, considered as a substitute for religion itself, makes no converts and founds no churches. The real point which in the eighteenth century the champions of 'Revealed' as against 'Natural' Religion were endeavouring to make was that of the impossibility of *discovering* Christian truth by a mere process of abstract philosophising, without consideration of the concrete data of the historical process by which it was given to the world. The real sting of the modern suggestion that all the great religious systems enshrine relative truth in the same or in equivalent degree—that there is discoverable in all or any of them a common element of essential truth which

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

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is somehow separable from the historical accidents of its particular setting—lies precisely in the insinuation that what Professor Webb has called ‘the historical element’ is ultimately irrelevant. The historical element, in so far as it is both individual and particular as well as concrete (for that is the nature of history), is of necessity ‘in a certain way opaque’ (to use a phrase of Professor Webb’s) ‘to the understanding’; nevertheless ‘it is perhaps a sign that in Religion we have reached the most concrete and complete form of experience that here some recognition of the importance and even the necessity of the historical setting (though it is a necessity into which in the sense described we do not *see*) seems demanded in a way in which it is not with the discovery of a scientific law, or even of a moral principle. In the case of religion it would on the whole be true to say that it is in what are admittedly the highest forms of religion that this intimate connexion of the historical setting with the doctrine is most strongly felt, and that by the religious believer himself.’¹ It may be added that among all the great religions of the world the connexion between doctrine and history appears to be closest precisely in Christianity.

Troeltsch (to continue my exposition of his argument) is at one with Webb in recognising that ‘the productive energy of Religion is genuinely astir only in the historical religions, and it is with them that we are really concerned in defining our position relatively to the religious values of mankind. . . . In the last resort it is a question of the

¹ C. C. J. Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–63.

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struggle between at most three or four great leading revelations of the higher religious life, and between the corresponding forms of spiritual culture.' Indeed, in essentials it is a question of the relative values of *two* great lines of historic development, the one prophetic, Christian, Platonic, and Stoic, the other Buddhist and Oriental.

Of the religions which fall under one or the other of these two groups Troeltsch thinks that Judaism and Islam may be rejected on the double ground (1) that they are religions of Law rather than of Redemption, and (2) that they have only incompletely overcome the limitations of race. Neither of them can be regarded, on the ground of intrinsic worth, as being a serious rival to Christianity, which indeed claims to be the spiritual fulfilment and culmination of the former of the two. The claims of Buddhism and Brahmanism require to be more seriously considered, since the ultimate choice seems to lie between the religious tradition of Christendom and the religions of the East.

The great Oriental systems, however, though formidable and impressive, are yet defective, in ways which it is not difficult to point out. Brahmanism, for example, is intimately and fatally bound up with a system of caste: its wisdom is esoteric. Buddhism similarly is in its highest form the religion of an order of monks. Both faiths in their more popular forms have made compromises with polytheism and primitive superstition, in comparison with which the tolerated superstitions even of the most popular forms of Romanism, in countries like Sicily and Latin America, appear Puritanism

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itself. Both alike, moreover, though in different ways, are forms assumed by the idea of redemption as that idea is developed by the religious and ethical deepening of man's own inner life, in combination with dialectical criticism, on the soil of nature-religion. Thus, in the one case, God is conceived ultimately in neutral fashion as the absolute One, eternal, transcendent, changeless, in contrast with which the world in time and change with all its joys and sorrows is only appearance; and salvation consists in the attainment of speculative insight into this truth, as the result of which the soul melts away into absolute and distinctionless unity with God. In the other case, ultimate Reality is conceived simply as a fatalistic order of events behind which is 'the blessed Nothing'—Nirvana—to be attained not by speculative insight but by the practical negation of the will, combined with knowledge of the illusoriness and unreality of all things temporal. In both cases ethical ideas of self-conquest and of world-conquest are at work, together with a deeply religious realisation of the opposition between the world of appearance and the world of reality. But in both cases there is lacking any conception of the truth, power, and life of the higher world: *God, or the Ultimate Reality, does not take the initiative in the salvation or redemption of man: salvation in either case has to be sought, by those who achieve enlightenment, on the basis of their own efforts and their own strength of soul.*

The conclusion to be drawn from such an attempt at a comparative valuation of the great religions of the world is that Christianity is, in effect, the

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mightiest and completest revelation of personal religious life, since Christianity alone breaks completely with the limitations of mere nature-religion and conceives the higher world of spiritual Reality itself in terms of personal Life. In other words, Christianity alone reveals in satisfying fashion a living Godhead, active and operative, as contrasted with that which merely exists, and by so doing lifts the human soul out of the category of the merely existent, in order to unite it with God in the intimacy of personal fellowship : thereby setting the soul free, purified from guilt and from despair and strengthened by an inner life with God, for the active service of love towards God and man. Christianity, in a word, is *the religion par excellence* of spiritual redemption on a basis of sonship to God, instinct with a conception of Divine Purpose which alone can give positive meaning and value to human life.

Along these lines of thought Troeltsch was disposed to conceive of Christianity as being not merely the highest actual achievement of the spirit of man in the sphere of religion, but as the ultimate point of convergence of every other recognisable tendency of religious development. He did tend to conceive of it primarily as being an achievement of the spirit of man (though of course he would not have denied, and indeed virtually presupposed, the co-operation throughout of the Spirit of God) ; and he shrank from describing Christianity point-blank as the Absolute Religion, partly for the reason that he held that the absolute goal of religious development must transcend the limitations of history. ' History,' he

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wrote, 'is no place for absolute religions or absolute Personalities.' The absolute validity of any one of the great historical religions he regarded as incompatible with the full individuality which must be recognised in them all. Towards the end of his life it would appear that Troeltsch felt this more and more. In a lecture which his sudden death prevented him from delivering at Oxford, but which was delivered posthumously on his behalf, he made it plain that he had ceased to look forward with any confidence to the final triumph of Christianity through missionary enterprise over its rivals. Nevertheless he appears on the whole to have regarded it as the highest among actual revelations of the Divine Life in man, and in practice not to have looked for any further revelation transcending that of Christianity itself, though without ruling out in the abstract the theoretical possibility that such a further revelation might arise.

The prolonged and careful process of argument by which Troeltsch thus seeks to establish the *de facto* superiority of Christianity is of real and obvious value and importance. It appears nevertheless to do something less than justice to the character of the actual claim which Christianity makes. The argument, representing as it does the position of an exponent of what the late Dr. Sanday used to describe as a 'reduced' Christianity, takes no specific account of the characteristically Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. It is perhaps probable that if Troeltsch had been more accustomed to think of Christianity in terms of this doctrine he would have paid attention, in the course of his

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comparative review, to certain forms of Hindu religion in which devotion (*bhakti*) is paid to a more or less mythical being or beings (of whom Rama and Krishna are the most important), who are regarded as constituting a series of successive incarnations or *avatars* of Vishnu, Vishnu himself being a thinly-veiled manifestation of the supreme god Brahma.¹

It is true that the claims of these Hindu incarnational beliefs are in no case of such a nature as to be in a position to bear serious investigation from the point of view of historical science or criticism. It is probable that both Rama and Krishna are historical personages, but in the earliest legends about them they appear simply as traditional kings and warriors. Not until some three hundred years after their appearance in literature did they begin to be described as incarnations, and not until a much later date still did the belief arise that they were in the full sense incarnations of the Supreme. It is a further weakness that in Hindu thinking this system of theistic or quasi-theistic incarnational belief and corresponding religious devotion has to be related intellectually to a pantheistic and impersonal philosophy: the masculine Brahmā becomes the neuter Brahmā. Vishnu himself, who is manifested in these human *avatars* (in the earlier forms of the doctrine in animal *avatars* as well), is rather a god than God: in origin simply one of the numerous deities of Hindu polytheism. The developed mythologies of Krishna are far from

¹ For a study of Hindu Bhakti and other forms of 'incarnationist' religion in relation to Christianity see J. L. Johnston, *Some Alternatives to Jesus Christ* (Longmans, 1914), and cf. J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, chaps. ix and x.

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edifying, and the stories of his amours have in fact given rise to erotic sects of an immoral character, though this reproach does not extend to the Vaishnava religion as a whole. It is noticeable also that all Hindu incarnations are conceived as docetic ; the human or animal form of the god is in the last resort only a disguise : Vishnu is manifested in the form of a man ; he is not genuinely incarnate in manhood. There is a wide difference between belief in a series or succession of partial incarnations or *avatars* of a non-moral deity, and belief in one definitive Incarnation of the Being and Nature of the Most High in terms of manhood. The Hindu *bhakti* religion has given rise in many cases to a deep and fervent devotion of a lofty and spiritual kind, expressing itself in hymns and lyrics full of a wondering reverence for the condescension and humility of the god who thus consents to be born among men. But the basis of this fine literature is rather devotion to the *idea* of incarnation as such than to anything specifically worshipful in the character of the deity who becomes incarnate. That to which such non-Christian types of incarnational religion bear witness is rather the deep instinctive longing of the human soul for the manifestation of Deity in human nature, than the fact of any actual satisfaction of that longing.

Christianity, on the other hand, as an historical religion appears to stand or fall by the conviction that it is actually a fact that (as Mr. Edwyn Bevan has recently expressed it) ‘ the inner Reality of the universe has looked into human eyes through the eyes of Jesus Christ.’ It stands by its doctrine of

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Incarnation, as the religion not of man's search for God, but of God's search for man. Its emphasis is on the initiative of God, on the eternal self-sacrifice of Love Divine, wrought out in actual fact and consummated in Death and Resurrection. Its Jesus is an historical Figure, whose portrait (amid whatever critical uncertainties as regards the details of the story) stands out with vivid and unmistakable realism in the pages of the Synoptic Gospels, and whose life has from the beginning been interpreted by Christians as the supreme act of the Eternal God in history for man's redemption. The Pauline doctrine of the crucified and risen Son of God, the Johannine doctrine of the Word made Flesh, the later technical christologies of Creeds and Councils, in essentials do not go beyond the real implications of the earliest Christian devotion to Christ as Messiah and Lord; and behind that in turn stands the impression made by the words and deeds of the Christ Himself, His own consciousness of mission and of lordship and Messianic call, and those prophetic dreams and hopes of the Old Testament of which He claimed to be the spiritual goal. 'The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.' He came 'to give His life a ransom for many.' It is these convictions which at all times have constituted the inner nerve of Christianity, apart from which it ceases to be itself. On the basis of these convictions it claims to be the fulfilment of heathen faiths and of heathen mythologies of incarnation, the Divine answer to the human longing to which they testify, the Divine consummation of the prophetic dreams of Gentile

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no less than of Israelite religion. Alone among extant faiths it is able to claim the whole world for its parish on the basis of its confident faith in the spiritual world-purpose of the one true and living God, a world-purpose of which the end (in the phrase of S. Paul) is 'to sum up all things' eventually 'in Christ.'

Of course, any historical incarnation of the Divine Life in terms of human life must of necessity be historically conditioned, and the emergence within the stream of world-history of the Person in whom, according to the faith of Christianity, the meaning of history is ultimately summed up, formed no exception to this rule. The Jesus of history was a Jew, a Peasant, a Carpenter: He was the inheritor of a specific religious and cultural tradition, and His life was lived at a particular time and place, amid individual and particular surroundings. In one sense obviously He is a particular historical character among other historical characters, a possible object of historical research and of purely historical contemplation; and it is a mistake so to read the story in terms of a purely abstract theology as to miss or ignore the individual traits which give reality and definition to the facts. So again, as we have already emphasised in opposition to Ritschlianism, the revelation of God in Christ is not to be isolated from other moments or aspects of Divine Revelation; what Christianity claims for the revelation in Jesus Christ is supremacy, and not monopoly, of truth. As Baron von Hügel has wisely remarked, 'the Unincarnate God has . . . a wider range, though a less deep message, than the

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Incarnate God ; and these two Gods are but one and the same God.' ¹ Despite, however, what must be admitted to be in one sense the historical relativity of the Christian story, the Christian Church (which after all may claim to have tested its Gospel by now in relation to a considerable variety of races and of types and stages of culture) has discovered in Jesus an universal value for all races and types of mankind, has felt itself constrained to interpret the facts of His life as being of more than merely relative significance, and has seen in the historical story the expression in time of an eternal and super-historical Reality.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, in its distinctively Christian form, is of such a nature as to invest the Person of Jesus, for such as accept it, with what can only be described as a final and absolute value. Jesus of Nazareth, Peasant, Jew, and Carpenter, is on the Christian view so unspotted a mirror of Deity, so supremely the Incarnation of Godhead in Manhood, that it is not possible to dispense with a transcendental doctrine of who He is. An historical Personage, Man among men, in the fullest, most concrete and individual sense, He is yet, on the Christian hypothesis, an eternal Person, transcending the relativity of the historical flux, in a true sense the contemporary of all the generations of mankind. It is a difficult doctrine, indeed ; but it is one which, on the assumption of its truth, precludes in principle the emergence of any completer or more adequate revelation of God.

¹ *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 134.

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It is saved from being merely retrospective, from mere imprisonment in Galilee, by the complementary Christian doctrine of the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, indwelling the Christian Community as the living creative Energy of God, interpreting afresh in every generation the things of Christ in relation to fresh historical situations, and making them continually new. In the power of the Spirit the Christian Church of history has absorbed and christianised many elements of religious and ethical and philosophical thought, as well as of devotional and institutional practice, which did not come to it originally from Galilee, but from the spiritual heritage of the heathen. Some at least of the new elements which thus came into Christianity sprang, in the phrase of von Hügel, from the God Unincarnate. It is a mistake to attempt to live archaistically in Galilee, to interpret the Gospels after the letter, rather than after the Spirit, to prove blind to the lessons of history, and to reject what the Spirit, working through Christian history, has brought to pass. The hope of the future for Christianity lies neither in reversion to the first century nor in uncriticised acceptance of the twentieth. The Spirit nevertheless witnesses to Christ, and it is by their spiritual congruity or incongruity with the mind of Christ as reflected in the Gospels, and with the Character and Being of God as revealed in Jesus, that on the Christian view all Gentile elements need to be tested.

The acceptance on the part of any individual thinker of such a doctrine of Incarnation as I have

endeavoured to sketch must always be in the last resort a confession of personal faith. It is difficult, nevertheless, to see how the Christian Church as a whole can be content to affirm anything less. Individuals will always find it possible to adopt a more minimising interpretation. The extraneous world will find it possible to deny *in toto* the whole religious point of view. But the Christian Church lives by her faith : and her faith is in Christ Incarnate and in the continuous revelation of the Spirit. She bears witness before men to her belief in the Triune God, but she cannot compel men to believe. She declares by the authority of the Spirit a more transcendent truth than she can demonstrably 'prove.' Is this after all to fall back simply upon an *Anspruchstheologie*—a theology based upon the Church's own claim that her Gospel is true? In a sense, no doubt, yes : and the claim has to be made good on its own merits and in the power of the Spirit, amid the clash and the welter of competing religions and philosophies by which the modern world is spiritually beset. But the claim is one which is capable of rational defence, and for which reasons can be given, even though in the last resort the appeal is to the spiritually verifiable authority of religious Revelation. There are, indeed, multitudes who, in the words of S. John, have 'set to their seal that God is true,' and have discovered in Jesus Christ the Incarnation of very God. But that is on a basis, not of strictly intellectual demonstration, but of religious conviction : and religious convictions, as Troeltsch himself justly remarks, are not to be had save at the cost of

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exposure to the contradiction and gainsaying of the children of the world.¹ The Church, in the last resort, must be content to preach and to proclaim, rather than intellectually to demonstrate, her Gospel, of which she is nevertheless confident that it is in very truth 'the power of God unto salvation.'

¹ 'Ohne die Anfechtung und den Spott der Weltkinder gibt es überhaupt keine religiösen Ueberzeugungen.' (*Op. cit.*, p. 81.)

CHAPTER VI

SACRAMENTAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION

POSITIVE and historical Religion is not mediated exclusively by historical facts. It is mediated by the Spirit. And the Spirit operates not only through the living tradition of the prophetic Word, and not only through incalculable and unforeseeable inspirations, blowing as it lists ; it operates also through institutional forms and sacramental rites. The Christianity of history is a sacramental and institutional religion, and without institutional mediation of some kind there would to-day have been no knowledge of Christ whatever in the world.

Christianity [writes Baron von Hügel] is irreducibly *incarnational* : and this its Incarnationalism is already half misunderstood, or half suppressed, if it is taken to mean only a spirituality which, already fully possessed by souls outside of, and prior to, all sense stimulations and visible vehicles and forms, is then simply expressed and handed on in such purely spiritual ways. No : some such stimulations, vehicles, and forms are (upon the whole and in the long run) as truly required fully to awaken the religious life as they are to express it and to transmit it, when already fully awakened. . . . In spite of George Fox and many another noble would-be Pure Interiorist, a simply invisible Church and Religion does not exist among men. Fox and his friends are

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steeped in images and convictions that have grown up amongst, that have been handed down by, concrete, historical men, and concrete, historical institutions and cultural acts. The 'Universal Reason,' 'the Word,' 'the Inner Light,' 'the Universal Brotherhood,' 'the Bread of Life,' are all based upon some two thousand years of Jewish and Christian Church experience, articulated in part by centuries of Greek philosophical thought.

What remains true is that the Invisible is the central—is the heart of religion: that the Visible can be so taken as to choke the Invisible; that there are, amongst those who see too exclusively the Visible, fanatics who would declare the Invisible to be coterminous and identical with the Visible, just as, amongst those who too exclusively apprehend the Invisible and the intolerableness of the foregoing abuse, there are enthusiasts so little aware of the history and implications of their convictions and of the constitution of our common human nature, as to seek an impossible and unchristian (because unincarnative and unhistorical) simplification—an Invisible achieved outside of all contact with the Visible.¹

Despite a certain modern impatience with sacramental and institutional conceptions of religion, I believe the Baron in the passage I have quoted to be profoundly right. I believe that religious individualism, where it exists and is spiritually real, is in a true sense unconsciously parasitic upon the larger and deeper stream of religious and spiritual inspiration which is mediated by the corporate and institutional life of the Church: and that the disappearance from modern religious life of the elements of cultus, of churchmanship, of sacramental

¹ Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses in the Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 230–231.

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and institutional continuity, supposing it to have universally taken place, would mean not merely a calamitous impoverishment of religion on its corporate side, but also the drying up of some of the most vital well-springs of personal and individual religious life. New movements of the Spirit are indeed not as a rule directly institutional at first: the creative impulse is normally mediated through prophets rather than through priests. Nevertheless, the work of the priests, though not in itself originaive, is needed to conserve and make permanent the fruits of prophecy, and prophetic revelations normally survive by taking shape in institutions. It was so in Judaism, in which the results of the work and teaching of the great prophets were gathered up and conserved through the priestly Law; and the Judaism which canonised the Prophets and the Wisdom Literature side by side with the Law made provision thereby for the possibility of that continuous prophetic criticism of the inner spirit of legalism which an institutionalised religion permanently requires. It was so also in Christianity, in which what was originally, from one point of view, a prophetic movement within Judaism gave rise to the institutionalism of the Catholic Church.

Students of Comparative Religion are familiar with the type of story known as a 'foundation legend,' in which the existence and obligation of a religious rite or practice is explained by reference to its institution by authority in the past. So in the case of Judaism the institutions of the (largely post-prophetic and post-exilic) Law were

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explained by being referred to Moses, and in the official theology of the Roman Church the developed institutions of Catholicism are referred directly to the command and deliberate injunction of Jesus during His life on earth.¹ Save for a difference of opinion as to the particular institutions recognised, the view of pre-critical Protestantism was precisely the same. The Catechism of the Church of England assumes without question that the two greater sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord were 'ordained by Christ Himself,' as also that they are 'generally' (i.e. universally) 'necessary to salvation.' Old-fashioned Tractarianism would add Episcopacy, Confirmation, and Penance to the number of these direct sacramental institutions of the Lord, filling up for this purpose the blank cheque afforded by the statement in Acts i. 3 that Jesus, during the 'forty days' intervening between the Resurrection and the Ascension, spoke to His disciples of 'the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.' Common to all these positions is the assumption that Christianity on its sacramental and institutional side was directly foreseen and contemplated in detail by the Jesus of history, that He deliberately made provision as to its future with full knowledge and as it were with legislative intent, and that the Church is, or should be, governed and

¹ Cf. the words of the anti-modernist oath, which since September 1910 has been imposed upon every Roman Catholic priest: *Firma pariter fide credo ecclesiam . . . per ipsum verum atque historicum Christum, cum apud nos degeret, proxime ac directo institutam eandemque super Petrum apostolicae hierarchiae principem eiusque in aevum successores aedificatam.* (Quoted by Heiler, to the relevant portions of whose work on Catholicism I am largely indebted in the course of this lecture.)

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limited as to its institutional and sacramental practice for all subsequent time by the obligation of literal loyalty to the conscious and explicit intention of its historical Founder during His life on earth. It is a surviving relic of this point of view which is in question whenever, for example, certain relatively modern developments of sacramental cultus are criticised upon the formal ground that they presumably formed no part of the purpose for which the sacrament was originally instituted at the Last Supper.

The effect of historical and comparative criticism is to suggest a less rigid and legalistic attitude towards questions of institutional development. In the first place the fundamental assumption of the older point of view—the assumption, that is, that the Jesus of history deliberately intended to found a Church and to institute sacraments—is called seriously in question, and by those who would go back to the Jesus of history *exclusively*, the sacramentalism of later Christianity is regarded, with growing unanimity, as being an alien and unjustified accretion, an intrusion of foreign elements into the Gospel. From a less narrow point of view it is recognised that Christianity needs to be understood in terms of a doctrine of the Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit's guidance is to be traced in the growth and development of the Christian Church. Sacraments and institutions, the development of which can be clearly traced in germ within the period of the New Testament itself, are to be referred through the Spirit rather to the risen and exalted Lord than directly to Jesus during the period of His life on

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earth. 'When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.'

The mind of the Jesus of history was primarily that of a Prophet, and His outlook in large measure the eschatological outlook of later Judaism. The deeper values discoverable in Him, and the doctrine of the Incarnation itself, do not alter this fact. And the mind of a prophet is neither omniscient nor primarily predictive of future events. The true prophet's vision is rather of spiritual truth than of specific occurrences. His vision of the future takes normally the form of a symbolic eschatology not destined to be literally fulfilled. Not otherwise does it appear to have been in the case of our Lord. He looked forward to death, and beyond death to the coming of the Son of Man and the End of the Age. In so far as He was concerned with a 'Church,' it was with the existing Church-nation of Israel, which He came to redeem. The New Testament view of the Church is not really that it is a new Church, specifically founded by Jesus, but rather that it is the ancient Church, Israel, the spiritual People of God, existing in a new form and upon a new basis because of the coming of the Messiah, and because of the two facts that the majority of Israel after the flesh had rejected the Christ, and that the Gentiles had been admitted to the fellowship of the true Israel after the Spirit.

And the attitude of Jesus towards the Church and towards Church institutions was that of a Prophet: that is to say, He took them for granted, but they were not His primary concern. 'The

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scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.' The Law is 'the commandment of God,' though the oral accretions of tradition are but precepts of men. The Temple is holy in His eyes: it is His Father's House: He cleanses it with indignation against those who polluted its sanctity. He keeps the Feasts. He goes up to Jerusalem for the Passover. He attends Synagogue on the Sabbath days. He bids the healed leper go and offer the proper sacrifices prescribed by the Law. In a word, the institutional system of Judaism is from first to last the natural background and setting of the personal religion of Jesus. He does not disapprove of religious symbolism, or go out of His way to rebuke superstition. He takes part in a national movement of Repentance, and is baptised with the Baptism of John; and the outward rite mediates to Him a great inward and spiritual experience. It makes Him certain of His mission. It mediates His Messianic Anointing with the Holy Spirit and with power. The Lord is neither an institutional iconoclast nor a Puritan.

On the other hand He is certainly not primarily a ritualist. He is Himself a layman, and He is well aware of the specific perils of good Churchmanship, the disposition to tithe mint and anise and cummin and to neglect the weightier matters of the Law. He knows that it is fatally easy to be correct in conformity to outward observances, and to be satisfied therewith. He quotes once and again the great prophetic word of Hosea, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,' and His own mission is prophetic, not institutional. In His teaching He lays stress

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on the grand simplicities of spiritual religion, the need of a heart right with God, the fundamental confidence in the heavenly Father's love and care, the love of God and of one's neighbour, the divine charity that in S. Paul's phrase suffers long and is kind, the readiness to forgive, the need of each human soul for the forgiveness of God. It is difficult to think that the Church-institutions and sacraments of later Christianity are referable directly to Jesus.

On the other hand, an incipient institutionalism is traceable from the first moment that Christianity, as a movement distinguishable from Judaism, comes into being. As Friedrich Heiler has put it, 'the catholicising of Christianity begins immediately after Jesus' death.' The original Church-community at Jerusalem, as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, displays already in germ the three fundamental elements of ecclesiastical Catholicism—dogma, hierarchy, and sacrament. From the beginning the dogma is proclaimed that 'there is none other Name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved.'¹ From the beginning there appears to have been the distinction drawn between 'the Apostles' and 'the rest'²—the believers continue steadfastly 'in the Apostles' teaching and in the Fellowship.'³ From the beginning the observance described as 'the Breaking of the Bread'⁴ is their characteristic rite; and from the beginning converts are admitted into the community of the redeemed Israel,

¹ Acts iv. 12

² Acts ii. 42.

³ Acts v. 12-13.

⁴ Acts ii. 42, 46.

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consisting of those who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, by the external rite of Baptism into His Name.¹

Faith and repentance were presupposed by this Baptism, which symbolised cleansing, the washing away of the past. It was an entrance-ceremony, an initiation rite into the community. It mediated—in combination, probably, with the laying on of hands—the gift of the Spirit, that strange new transforming Energy of God which was manifested at first in tumultuous ecstasy, in speaking with tongues and in works of power, and which re-created human souls and brought forth in them the supernatural fruits of love and joy and peace. This Baptism was at first ‘into the Name’—that is, into the power—of the risen Jesus. It marked believers as belonging to Him, as under His protection, as members of His community, filled with His Spirit. Before the end of the first century it was commonly administered in the threefold Name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Church believed it to be traceable, with what degree of historical justification we cannot tell, to the express command of the risen Jesus, as may be read in the closing verses of S. Matthew.² Perhaps the very fact that it was ascribed to the *risen* Jesus betrays the realisation that it was not directly instituted by Jesus during His life upon earth. But the origin and early history of Christian Baptism are obscure, and its beginnings constitute in detail one of the unsolved problems of the New Testament.

¹ Acts ii. 38, etc.

² Matt. xxviii. 19.

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As with the sacraments, so with the ministry. The beginnings of an institutional ministry, dependent, as it would seem, upon the general oversight of the Apostles, are traceable, upon any view, in the New Testament. The Church becomes conscious of itself as an Apostolic Society, sent from Christ, as Christ was sent from God. Out of that consciousness, and out of the germinal episcopate of the Twelve and of S. Paul and perhaps of other 'Apostolic men,' there was developed eventually both the episcopal hierarchy and also the doctrine of Apostolical Succession—a doctrine which since the Reformation has become controversial, as the result of the abandonment of episcopacy by some sections of Christendom, but which originally was not controversial at all: it was merely a recognition of the facts—the broad fact of ecclesiastical continuity from Apostolic times, the further fact that the Bishops of later days occupied in relation to the Church within their sphere of jurisdiction the same kind of position which had been occupied in relation to the earliest Christian Church by the Apostles.

As with the ministry, so also with the beginnings of Church discipline. Apart from the curious story of Ananias and Sapphira,¹ there are the cases of the excommunicated person at Corinth² and of Hymenæus and Alexander.³ There is the assumption of the corresponding right to re-admit penitents to communion.⁴ It is taken for granted that what the Church does is done in the power of the Spirit

¹ Acts v. 1-11.

² 1 Tim. i. 20.

³ 1 Cor. v. 3 *sqq.*

⁴ 2 Cor. ii. 6-10.

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and by the authority of God. 'What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'¹ 'Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.'² 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.'³ In such passages there is the authentic ring of the claim of the later Church to theocratic authority in the power of the Spirit. It is possible to approve or to disapprove of it, but it is impossible to deny that it is there. It is not too much to say that every one of the traditional seven sacraments of the Church has its root and beginning in the Christianity of Apostolic times, with the exception indeed of Marriage, which is traced by our Lord Himself to the eternal ordinance of God at the Creation. Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation as the spiritual 'seal' of the baptised, Holy Order, Penance (in the early form of primitive Church discipline), Unction (in the primitive form of the anointing of the sick)⁴—all are to be found, either in germ or fully developed, in the Christianity of the New Testament. The Christianity of the New Testament taken as a whole is already Catholic. It is Catholic in the sense that it has ceased to be the religion of a nation, or rather of a sect within a nation, and has become potentially the religion of the world. It is also Catholic in the sense that it already possesses the essential germs of all the Catholic institutions. The candid scholarship of

¹ Matt. xviii. 18.

² John xx. 23.

³ Acts xv. 28.

⁴ Mark vi. 13 ; Jas. v. 14.

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great Protestant writers in Germany no longer disputes this fact. 'The strength and attractive power of the new Religion,' writes Harnack, 'lay in the number of polar elements of religion which it embraced, side by side with the preaching of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen One. From the beginning it was eminently syncretistic, and for that very reason it was from the beginning the Catholic Religion. In the course of its later development it might become more complicated, but not more many-sided, than it already was when it entered the Roman Empire.'¹ The Protestant attenuation of historical Christianity is in fact only able to maintain itself in scholarly circles by dint of concentrating upon the 'evangelical' elements in the New Testament, and ignoring the 'catholic' elements, or treating them frankly as perversions. In so doing it can be claimed that it is concentrating upon the 'one thing needful,' which ecclesiasticism in some of its moods has tended to forget. The Gospel without the sacraments would be more Christian than the sacraments without the Gospel. Nevertheless either without the other is less than the Christianity of the New Testament or of history.

The history of the Eucharist is important

¹ 'Die Stärke und Anziehungskraft der neuen Religion . . . lag neben und mit der Verkündigung von Jesus Christus, dem Gekreuzigten und Auferstandenen, in der Fülle der polaren religiösen Elemente, die sie von Anfang an umfasst hat. . . . Sie war von Anfang an eine eminent synkretistische und ebendeshalb von Anfang an die katholische Religion. . . . Sie konnte im Fortgang ihrer Entwicklung wohl complicierter, aber nicht vielseitiger werden, als sie es schon bei ihrem Eintritt in das römische Reich gewesen war.' (Harnack, *Marcion*, p. 5.)

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enough to deserve separate consideration. It has been thought that the rite may have arisen partly out of the usage by which a Jewish house-father at a meal solemnly blessed and broke bread, with thanksgiving to God. The Lord Jesus doubtless acted as house-father to the little company of His disciples at their corporate meals, and there was probably something specially characteristic about His manner of looking up to heaven and giving thanks as He blessed and broke the bread.¹ Added to this was the memory of the Last Supper, when Jesus in anticipation of coming death took bread and blessed and broke and gave it to His disciples, describing it as His Body, and likewise a cup (according to Jewish usage, of wine mingled with water), describing it as His Blood—‘the Blood of the Covenant poured out on behalf of many’²—and adding that He would not henceforth drink of the fruit of the Vine until the day when He should drink a new wine with them in the Kingdom of God.³ Already by the time of S. Paul it was believed that He had added after ‘This is My Body’ the words ‘which is for you: this do in remembrance of Me’; and the words ‘this is My Blood of the Covenant poured out on behalf of many,’ to which S. Matthew adds ‘unto the remission of sins,’ appear in the Pauline version in the form ‘This Cup is the New Covenant in My Blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.’

The effect of the twice-repeated injunction

¹ Cf. Mark vi. 41; viii. 6; Luke xxiv. 30, 35.

² Mark xiv. 24.

³ Mark xiv. 25.

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'This do in remembrance of Me' is to represent our Lord at the Last Supper as definitely intending to institute a rite which was designed to be a permanent observance of the Church. The received text of St. Luke¹ has the words in question in connexion with the blessing of the Bread (probably as the result of assimilation to the Pauline tradition), but not in connexion with the giving of the Cup. The accounts in S. Matthew and S. Mark, taken as they stand, might be read without any implication that the rite was to be repeated. On the other hand, the Pauline account is earlier in date as a written document than any of the Gospels,² and it is possible that the latter merely summarise what was already a well-known liturgical tradition. Whether in obedience to a direct injunction of the Lord or not, it is clear that the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper did have the effect of giving rise to a permanent observance, that the scene at the Last Supper was the germ from which the Eucharist developed.³

To say precisely what meaning the Eucharist will have conveyed to the earliest groups of Christians who observed it is, in default of evidence, no easy matter. It is probable that the telling of the story

¹ The shorter text which omits Luke xxii. 19b-20 has the authority of D and of some old Latin authorities, and has been thought to point to a variant usage in which the Cup preceded the Bread. The *textus receptus* of Luke has two Cups, one before and one after the giving of the Bread.

² 1 Cor. xi. 23 *sqq.* The first Epistle to the Corinthians was written probably in A.D. 51-52. S. Mark, the earliest of the existing Gospels, was probably written at Rome after the martyrdoms of S. Peter and S. Paul.

³ The theory that the origin of the Eucharist was a revelation made to S. Paul in a vision may be rejected without hesitation.

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of the Last Supper and the commemoration of the Passion and Resurrection already in pre-Pauline usage formed part of the observance, and it has been remarked that S. Paul's words 'Ye proclaim the Lord's death' correspond to the *haggada* or 'sacred story' of the Jewish Passover ritual, which consisted mainly of the telling of the story of the Exodus.¹ That the commemoration included the Resurrection as well as the Passion is clear from the fact that Sunday, rather than Friday, seems from the beginning to have been the day on which the Eucharist was specially observed. The words 'till He come' suggest further that the Eucharist had originally an eschatological significance. As the Lord at the Last Supper had looked forward to the 'new wine' of the Kingdom of God, so it has been thought that the earliest worshippers looked upon the Eucharist as in some sense a fore-taste of the Messianic Feast, and as they partook, in the unseen presence of the exalted Lord, of the Bread and Wine that had been blessed and hallowed in His Name, the thought of a sacramental union with Him lay close at hand.

In S. Paul's teaching certainly, if not earlier, the step has been taken. The Eucharist is not only a dramatic memorial of the Lord's redemptive death: it is a sacred mystery, wherein by participation in the Bread and Cup of the Lord there is effected a mystic communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.² The Eucharist for S. Paul is a

¹ G. H. Box, *Jewish Antecedents of the Eucharist* (J. Th. S. April 1902.)

² I Cor. x. 16.

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supernatural Food and Drink, comparable to the Manna and the Water from the Rock of Hebrew story.¹ To partake unworthily, by failing to discriminate the Lord's Body from common bread, is to eat and drink condemnation, to be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. S. Paul believes sickness and death to have been the penalty of such profanation.² The Eucharist is analogous to the sacrificial feasts of paganism; the Cup of the Lord is compared and contrasted with the cup of demons, the Table of the Lord with the table of demons, i.e. of pagan mystery-gods.³

The parallel with much of the language and thought of Greek and Oriental mystery-cults is close and obvious, but it is not probable that the sacramental idea in Christianity was directly derived by conscious borrowing from such sources. S. Paul is clearly aware of the analogy, as also was later Christianity, but it is probable that in his teaching and in that of other Christian missionaries of his day the sacramental interpretation of the Eucharist was an independent development. The parallelisms lay in the nature of the case. The Eucharist did possess for Christian faith and devotion a sacramental significance, precisely as it does still. It mediated communion with the risen Lord. The elements of Bread and Wine, consecrated by thanksgiving and prayer, became charged, in the light of the solemn words attributed to Jesus at the Last Supper, with mystical meaning: the Bread became in some sense His Body, the Wine became

¹ 1 Cor. x. 3-4; cf. Ex. xvi. 15, 35; xvii. 6.

² 1 Cor. xi. 27-30.

³ 1 Cor. x. 20-21.

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His Blood. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who thinks of our Lord as the heavenly Priest of the eternal sacrifice, compares Him to Melchizedek, that strange figure of the Old Testament, of whom we read in Genesis that he was 'King of Salem' and 'Priest of God Most High,' and that he 'brought forth Bread and Wine.'¹

For the Fourth Evangelist, as for the Church Catechism, Baptism and Eucharist are both alike 'necessary to salvation.' 'Except a man be born of Water and of the Spirit,' he writes, 'he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'² 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves.'³ The two great sacraments are symbolised by the Water and the Blood flowing from the pierced side of the dying Saviour.⁴ As Heiler expresses it :

The Eucharist is for S. John the mysterious Food, which imparts the divine power of life and immortality. It is for him, as the same thought was expressed by an early Christian Church writer, 'the medicine of immortality, given that men may not die.'⁵ That which for the carnal mind is the chief stumbling-block⁶ is for the heart of the mystic the greatest miracle. Mystical vision pierces through outward sense and symbolism as through the thinnest of veils to the supersensual mystery of eternal life. 'It is the Spirit that maketh alive, the flesh profiteth nothing.'⁷ . . . S. John has discovered the secret of that harmony

¹ Gen. xiv. 18 ; cf. Heb. vi. 20 sqq.

² John iii. 5.

³ John vi. 53.

⁴ John xix. 34 ; cf. 1 John v. 6-8.

⁵ Φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, ἀντίδοτος τοῦ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν. The words are used by Ignatius of Antioch (martyred about A.D. 110) in writing to the Christian Church at Ephesus.

⁶ John vi. 60 sqq.

⁷ John vi. 63.

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between the spiritual and the sensible, between the earthly and the heavenly, in which all the great Christian mystics have lived.¹

It is perhaps unnecessary, as it is certainly impossible, to trace in detail the story of the Eucharist through the centuries. In the conflict between the competing mystery-cults which contended for the spiritual mastery of the Graeco-Roman world the Church was victorious. Christianity was the 'mystery-religion' which prevailed, and the Church in a sense served itself heir of the ancient heathen mystery-cults. The Eucharist was the Christian 'mystery' *par excellence*, to which only the baptised initiate was admitted. The originally free prayer of the celebrant gave place to rapidly-developing liturgical forms of remarkable beauty and stately dignity of phraseology and thought. The dress of the ministers at the time of their ministration became specialised—like Aaron they assumed 'holy garments for glory and for beauty,'² originally only the holiday attire of civil life, retained in liturgical usage after secular fashions had changed. Music and singing were introduced, and symbolic ceremonial developed. The Eucharist became a mimetic drama, representing in symbolism the sacred drama of Calvary and Easter. It was interpreted as the Christian sacrifice, mystically offered to God the Father through the Spirit, in union with the eternal sacrifice of Christ. The Saviour's Blood had been shed once for all on Calvary; the perfect offering of life and of obedience, which was the means whereby man had been made

¹ Heiler, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

² Exod. xxviii. 2.

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one with God and God with man, had once for all been made in a redemptive Death which was of eternal significance; and the Christ was alive for evermore. The Church's sacrifice, in which the Passion was mystically re-enacted, was a sacrifice without shedding of blood—*ἀναίμακτος θυσία*—the 'pure offering' foreshadowed in Scripture,¹ a sacrifice of so novel and spiritual a kind that to pagans it appeared as though Christians had no sacrifices at all. Walter Pater in *Marius the Epicurean* has a superb description of an early Christian Eucharist as it might have appeared to an interested and sympathetic pagan of the time of Marcus Aurelius.² It was the very eloquence of worship, the climax of human approach to the Most High, partly at least because at the root of it, and as its presupposition, was the faith that through the medium of the sacrament the Most High was brought near in spiritual approach to man, and gave Himself spiritually to be man's Food.

In the Fathers it was taught that a spiritual change takes place through the invocation of the Spirit over the Eucharistic Bread and Wine: they become instinct henceforward with a new significance: they are no longer common bread and common wine: they are Christ's Body and His Blood, the food of souls. In the Western Church a prosaic scholasticism eventually developed from this the technical doctrine of transubstantiation, from which the original Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation differed only by a shade.

In modern Protestantism any belief in the

¹ Mal. i. 11.

² *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 146 sqq.

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Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament is apt to be hastily condemned as 'magic.' It is not magic: it is the verdict of spiritual experience and of logic, interpreting the sacraments in the light of a true philosophy of the relation of the material to the spiritual order in the economy of God's universe. A well-known member of the Labour Party in England is reported to have remarked that the Church must at all costs hold on to the two doctrines of sacraments and of vocation; they stood together in affirming the supremacy of Spirit over the material order, and without them men were in continual danger of regarding themselves as the mere victims of mechanical necessity. 'Magic,' writes Baron von Hügel, 'begins only when and where things physical are taken to effect spiritual results apart altogether from minds transmitting or receiving. It is doubtless the fear of priestly power and its intrusion into politics which has determined (from, say, Wyclif, until now) this quite unphilosophical "magic" scare among so many Protestants.' ¹

There have been periods during which the function of the priest in consecrating the Eucharist has been half-magically interpreted: against this must be set the formal doctrine of Catholicism. 'The priest,' writes S. Thomas Aquinas, 'in consecrating the Eucharist acts as the representative of the whole Church, and it is as the representative of the Church that he utters the prayers.' ²

¹ *Essays and Addresses*, p. 251.

² 'Sacerdos consecrans eucharistiam hoc agit in persona totius ecclesiae; . . . sacerdos in missa in orationibus quidem loquitur in persona ecclesiae.' (*Summa Theologiae*, iii. q. 87, a. 7.)

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The liturgical Mystery [says Heiler], however paradoxical it may appear, is a great proclamation of the all-sufficiency of grace—'eine grosse Predigt der *gratia sola*.' Priest and congregation as individuals do nothing, it is the Church as the bearer of inspiration, the Church as a mystic corporate personality, that acts and speaks and works and utters prayer; and this mystic corporate personality is the Body of Christ, is Christ Himself: it is the Son of God who in the last resort is the great liturgical Celebrant and High Priest; it is He who baptises and offers sacrifice and gives Himself as the food of souls and absolves and bestows authority. The liturgical celebrant at the altar is only His instrument, the priest who prays at the altar is only His mouth-piece. . . . It is this strong objectivity which makes the Catholic cultus of the sacraments capable of mediating the secret things of God. Here is the deepest ground of the remarkable influence which it succeeds in exercising, particularly in the spiritual atmosphere of to-day. The more the spiritual culture of an age is swept into the whirlpool of subjectivism, the more impressive is the appeal of the complete objectivity which Catholicism embodies in its dogma, its institutions, and its liturgy. Such an objectivity opens up to a subjectively distraught generation a pathway to the Divine: for the Divine is that which is utterly objective, τοῦ ὁντος ὄν, *ens realissimum*. The attraction of the Catholic liturgy for many circles in the spiritual world of Germany to-day is due to the reaction of spiritual weariness against the disintegrating subjectivism fostered by Liberal Protestantism in particular.¹

During the later Middle Ages the liturgical and sacrificial aspects of the Eucharist tended to become divorced from its original significance as a Brotherhood-Feast of corporate Communion with the Lord. The Mass came to be thought of as a sacrifice which

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 421-422.

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might be offered with special intention by or on behalf of an individual: hence an immense multiplication of private Masses, and hence, too, the origin of the custom whereby every priest said his Mass daily with a specific 'intention' in his mind. The daily Mass became everywhere normal, but at the majority of Masses the priest alone communicated. The obligation of attendance at Mass on Sundays and other festivals was recognised, but communion on the part of the laity became infrequent. Private communion in early times was recognised but was exceptional. Practically the Eucharist was reserved only for the use of the sick or for other persons unavoidably prevented from being present at the celebration in the church. In modern Romanism, although frequent communion is once more encouraged and is usual with those who are at all devout, it is more common to give communion to the laity from the reserved sacrament apart from the liturgy than to communicate them during the actual celebration of the Mass. A 'Liturgical Movement' exists in Southern Germany, promoted by the Benedictines, which aims at restoring the ancient practice of corporate communion in the course of the liturgy itself, as well as at making the liturgy itself more congregational and better understood.

The Protestant Reformers, in reaction against the mediaeval system, and influenced by their reading of the New Testament, aimed, as the phrase went, at turning the Mass into a Communion. It was enjoined in the English Prayer Book that unless at least three parishioners in addition to the

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priest were proposing to receive Holy Communion the Eucharist should not be celebrated at all. The immediate effect of this regulation (whatever its intention) was that, except as a very infrequent and occasional observance, the Eucharist disappeared altogether from the religious practice of the ordinary man, to the immense impoverishment of Christian worship. Wesleyanism began as a 'High Church' movement which laid stress upon frequent communion and strictness of living, and in the modern development of Anglo-Catholicism, which may be said to date from the 'Oxford Movement' of ninety years ago, both aspects of the Eucharist—the Eucharist as liturgical Offering and the Eucharist as Communion—have been revived together, with the result that the numerous parishes which have frankly restored High Mass are also, on the whole, those which tend to have the strongest tradition and practice of communion. The early Eucharist, specialised for the purpose of general communion, is celebrated before breakfast: the 'High Celebration,' specialised for the purposes of worship, and interpreted as a solemn act of thanksgiving, adoration, oblation, and intercession, takes place at a later hour with added ceremonial, music, and usually sermon.

Attention has been drawn by Heiler to the deepening of the devotional life which found its focus in the Eucharist as the result of the movement of Christian Mysticism, more especially from the thirteenth century onwards. Phrases like 'sacramental grace,' 'Bread of Life,' 'medicine of immortality,' or even 'communion of the Lord's Body

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and Blood,' taken by themselves, might easily suggest the idea of an impersonal or quasi-impersonal 'means of grace,' an almost magical food of souls. The communion prayers of S. Thomas Aquinas, S. Bonaventura, Heinrich Suso, and Thomas à Kempis repeatedly strike a more emphatically personal note: the sacraments are henceforward interpreted with growing emphasis as points of personal contact with Jesus Christ, and the worship of the faithful is directed not to the elements regarded as mysterious embodiments of supernatural potency, but to Jesus. 'Lo, thou art here present unto me upon the altar, O God, my God, holy of holies, creator of men and lord of angels,' writes à Kempis. '*Adoro te devote, latens Deitas,*' writes S. Thomas Aquinas.

The cultus of Jesus in the sacrament culminates, from one point of view, in the modern practice of 'visits' to the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle, for the purpose of quiet prayer and contemplation, converse and spiritual communion with the Divine-human Christ, symbolised, expressed, and as it were incarnate in the Eucharistic Host. It is a shallowly rationalistic criticism which fails to appreciate the spiritual significance and beauty of such a cultus, which—once granted a belief in the Real Presence, or even, short of that, the recognition of the sacrament as a suggestive symbol of the Real Presence—is in itself simply one among many developments of an essentially evangelical idea, that, namely, of the relation of personal love and devotion between the Christian and his Lord. The same may be said of the modern Roman practice

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of Benediction, of which the essence is simply a silent gesture of blessing made with the reserved Host over the kneeling congregation, in token that Christ bestows His benediction upon those present. It is obvious that neither of these forms of devotion can be excluded from the reunited Church of the future, equally obvious that they will not appeal in the same degree to all varieties of temperament. As adopted in certain parishes of the Church of England to-day they are commonly regarded as exotic, and the Bishops have attempted to prohibit them, sometimes on the ground of theological arguments of doubtful cogency. The effect is to invest them in the minds and thoughts of controversialists with a higher degree of importance than they intrinsically deserve. They are simple and natural, but on the other hand wholly dispensable, forms of devotion, congenial to those who are mystically attracted by the idea of the sacramental presence of the Christ. The attempt to prevent their gradual adoption in 'advanced' Anglican circles will doubtless eventually fail. They will probably never become universal or even normal within Anglicanism; but interpreted, as they can be, in terms of a less rigidly scholastic sacramental theology than that of modern Rome, and safeguarded from narrow superstition by the free play of criticism, they will, it may be hoped, one day cease to be involved in the unedifying atmosphere of controversy, and be regulated, rather than forbidden, by Anglican episcopal authority. If there is any substance behind the fear which is sometimes expressed that belief in the perpetual presence

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of Jesus in the sacrament is liable to give rise to the idea that He is to be found nowhere else, the proper remedy would seem to lie in careful teaching, rather than in the attempt to suppress devotional instincts, however exotic they may at present appear to perhaps the majority of English minds.

Sacramental and institutional religion is a normal and in general a necessary means to the indispensable end of all religion which is genuinely Christian, namely the increase of love towards God and towards man. It fails of its purpose whenever it fails to minister to the one thing that is ultimately needful. A religion of the sanctuary or of the sacristy, in so far as it ever fails to make men Christlike, is in virtue of that failure self-condemned. Not without reason does Heiler draw attention to the saying ascribed to Jesus when His disciples were accused of breaking the Sabbath by plucking corn—*τοῦ ἱεροῦ μεῖζόν ἐστιν ὧδε*. 'Here is something greater than the Temple,'¹ of greater importance than any precept of institutional religion, for it is a question of human need. The same lesson is taught by the parable of the Good Samaritan, and by the whole trend of Jesus' teaching. The love of man, on the level of supernatural heroism, is not effectively possible except on the basis of the love of God and in the power of the Divine Spirit of all Love. The love of God is the first and the great Commandment. Nevertheless, 'if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this

¹ Matt. xii. 6. The true reading appears to be as above.

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commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.' ¹ It is only in proportion as sacramental worship and liturgical prayer bear fruit in the development of Christian character, as the worshippers derive from them the motive-power and spiritual capacity in some degree to break their own bodies and to give their lives in service to their brethren, that they correspond wholly to the spirit of the Jesus of history.

Let me quote or adapt the closing words of Heiler's chapter on the liturgical mystery of the Eucharist.

In the mean and narrow dwellings of the workers of a great city [he writes], where inspired disciples of Jesus give themselves in service to those who are destitute and disinherited, forgotten and despised, God may be even closer than in the choir of a glorious minster, wherein devout monks offer without ceasing to the eternal One the sacrifice of praise: *μείζον τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐστὶν ὧδε*. The Catholic liturgy is a wondrous achievement, of which one can never grow weary: nay, more than that, it is a revelation of the eternal God, who is the eternal Beauty and Holiness. And yet in the simplest service of love which a man renders to his brother there is a revelation even purer and more immediate of the Eternal, whose inmost heart is pure Mercy and Loving-kindness. For in the latter case the presence of God is manifested alike in the lover and the loved, in the sufferer and in him that ministers to suffering, in him that receives and also in him that gives. Concealed and unrecognised, the eternal God dwells and works here in the midst of men, and reveals His deepest secret: and he that beholds Him here may well kneel reverently, and with even deeper devotion and inner reality, if that were possible, than in the Catholic cultus of the mysteries, exclaim: *Adoro te devote, latens Deitas*. For 'here there is something greater than the Temple.'²

¹ 1 John iv. 20-21.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 434

CHAPTER VII

EVANGELICAL CATHOLICISM

THE mind of the younger generation is directed towards the future. It is dissatisfied with the immediate past, and with very much in the religion of the immediate past. It is particularly dissatisfied with sectarianism, with party cries and catchwords. Consciously or unconsciously, the younger generation seeks, like its predecessors, a faith by which to live : and despite all impatience with traditional ways of stating Christianity, despite all reaction against the Church and against the institutions of the Church, it is nevertheless disposed to suspect that truth is somehow to be found in Jesus. But there is a disposition also to wonder whether other religions too may not contain some element of truth. There is distrust of the validity of the old type of missionary apologetic which simply isolates the Gospel from all other elements in the religious outlook and practice of mankind. The younger generation does not believe in monopolies of truth.

There is a love of short cuts, a love of novelty, a great deal of intellectual haste and of spiritual shallowness. There is often a quite unjustified and unphilosophical distrust of orthodoxy and of

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tradition. But there is also a hatred of Pharisaism and of religious unreality, a respect for sincerity and whole-heartedness, a readiness to recognise that Religion, if it is to mean anything, must in the last resort mean everything. The younger generation will not seriously yield itself to any presentation of religion which does not claim the whole of a man's allegiance : and if it is prepared for religion at all, it is prepared for sacrifice. Religion, if it is to make any effective appeal to-day, must have in it the elements of spiritual heroism, of spiritual romance, and of spiritual beauty.

I have called this chapter Evangelical Catholicism, because I believe the religious hope of the future to lie in a genuinely free and evangelical presentation of Christianity as the Catholic Religion of mankind. The term 'Catholicism' stands for the idea of wholeness, of completeness, of synthesis in the presentation and in the practice of religion, as well as for the idea of universality. A sectarian or monopolist Catholicism is a contradiction in terms, though it is to be feared that more than one variety of sectarianism exists to-day which paradoxically usurps the style of 'Catholic.' The term 'evangelical' stands for the supremacy of the Gospel of Christ, in all the fulness of its simplicity and freedom. It means that the mind of Christ is the touchstone by which Catholic development is to be tested; and that by the inner spirit of the Gospel every element in the Catholic synthesis, if it is to be truly and legitimately Christian, must be penetrated and inspired. The power of the Gospel is seen precisely in its capacity to make all things new, to take up

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into itself religious practices and elements originally pagan, and so to transform and penetrate them that, being, as it were, baptized into Christianity and made to drink of the One Spirit, they are spiritually re-born. It is thus that the God Incarnate enters into the spiritual heritage of the heathen, and that the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into the heavenly City of the Christ. It was thus that in early days the Christian Church entered into the heritage of Roman law and Greek philosophy and pagan religious custom and aspiration. It is thus that in the days to come the religious spirit of the East will make its contribution too.

The Catholicism of history in its Roman form has been described as a *complexio oppositorum*, a complex synthesis of opposing factors. The analytically-minded observer has no difficulty in discovering within it survivals of primitive superstition paradoxically combined with rationalising theology, a rigid ecclesiastical legalism cheek by jowl with the evangelical Gospel of redemption, a quasi-political system of hierarchical church government and law, side by side with an esoteric mystery-cult and a sublime religious mysticism.¹ It is apt to appear an incongruous hotch-potch, a conglomerate of religions rather than a single religion—in Tyrrell's phrase, a microcosm of the religious world. In a true sense it represents a kind of summing up of the whole age-long religious history of mankind, wherein the earlier stages and the lower strata of man's religious approach to God, instead of being fully transcended and christianised, persist still unchanged, or at

¹ Heiler, *op. cit.*, p. 12, pp. 595 *sqq.*

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best only imperfectly assimilated, side by side with those elements which are genuinely Christian, or which are worthy to be included in Christianity as being revelations (in the words of von Hügel) of the Unincarnate God. What holds together all these diverse elements side by side and combines them into an unified yet infinitely various system is the Roman conception of Authority—a supernatural infallibility which justifies everything, an universality of jurisdiction vested ultimately in the Pope. It is this which renders the Roman system, despite its many-sided variety, and what is from one point of view its astonishing flexibility, in the last resort so impossibly rigid, in theory and to all human appearances so irreformable. And the same doctrine of development, the same faith in the operation of the Holy Spirit working through history, which gives to the Roman development of Christianity its relative right, gave also its relative right to the Reformation. Only at the cost of a breach with Rome was liberty able to be secured: and the fissiparous Christianity of the Protestant world has been the result.

It is the thesis of this book that Protestantism has worked itself out, that it has shown what it could do and what it could not do, that it has taught its unforgettable lesson, and is in a position now to gather up its gains; but that the time is approaching when its negative protests will be no longer required; at least that a return is both possible and necessary to a more balanced and Catholic point of view. For indeed the Catholic ideal is the true one. There is one God—therefore one People of God, one Lord,

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one faith, one Baptism. And the Gospel of Christ, though it is the supreme Revelation of God and the one ultimate hope of mankind, is not—taken narrowly by itself—the whole of religious and spiritual truth. The Christianity of the New Testament is a wider thing than the Gospel in this narrow sense : it is already a Catholic thing. It strains towards universality and inclusiveness. It includes (as witness the writings of S. Paul and of S. John) the beginnings of a Christian mysticism and of a Christian sacramentalism. It develops Church order and discipline. It is debtor both to the Jews and also to the Greeks. It is synthetic, many-sided, and free.

In the complex of later Romanism pagan elements have been included in an unassimilated or only partially assimilated form ; and the intrusion, moreover, of the spirit of legalism into Christianity has worked mischief. Many things may be and have been borrowed by modern Anglicans from Rome : but there is no need to take over from Romanism either its legalism or its primitive superstitions. The latter are excusable in a Church which has never been reformed, though they give trouble to the Roman theologians who are called upon to defend them. Their compulsory eradication from Roman Christianity, if ever reunion with Rome became practical politics, need not necessarily be demanded : in an atmosphere of free criticism they would eventually die out of themselves, or be so reinterpreted as to become harmless. But their adoption by a reformed Christianity would be sheer retrogression.

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Nevertheless the ideal of the universality of truth, and of the comprehension of pagan elements of religion in a purified form within a Christianised synthesis, is genuinely Christian. The Christian Church is debtor both to the Jews and to the Greeks, and to Oriental mystery-cults as well ; and such a Christian universalism is not untrue to the historical spirit of Him who in the Fourth Gospel is represented as saying that salvation is of the Jews, and who yet recognised in the Samaritan leper and in the Roman centurion a faith not manifested in Israel, and declared that many should come from the East and from the West and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God. The Gospel must speak the religious language not of the Jews only, but of mankind, if it is indeed to become the religion of the world. Baron von Hügel has finely written that 'we religious men, especially we Catholic Christians, will never indeed drop the noble truth and ideal of a universal unity of cultus and belief, of one single world-wide Church, but we will conceive this our deathless faith in religious unity as being solidly realisable only if we are able and glad to recognise the rudimentary, fragmentary, relative, pædagogic truth and worth in religions other than our own—a worth which, as regards at least Judaism and Hellenism, the Roman Church has never ceased to practise and to proclaim.' ¹

The revival of Catholicism, both in theory and in practice, within the borders of the Church which is in communion with the see of Canterbury, is probably the most significant fact in the religious

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

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history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Recent developments in England have convinced those of their mistake who had been disposed to think and to say that the Oxford Movement had run its course, and that Anglo-Catholicism was a dying cause. The leaders of Anglo-Catholicism in its modern form would themselves be the first to recognise that the spiritual depth of a movement is not to be gauged by Congresses, however successful, or its real strength measured by the energy of its propaganda, however efficient. Nevertheless the religious world—in England certainly, and to some extent also, as I imagine, in America—has been visibly impressed, and there are many who, considering these things, are disposed to remark, with Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, that they put them in hope and fear. The occasion seems opportune for some remarks about the Church of England, and about the possibilities of its future.

An apology seems demanded for speaking about the 'Church of England' to an American audience at all. Christianity is essentially an international religion, and the days of religious nationalism are, or should be, dead. The specific gifts and character of particular nations, as of particular individuals, are meant, indeed, to be baptised into Christ and to find expression in Christianity: but there can be no question of a specific version of spiritual truth or of Christianity for Englishmen, any more than for Americans. Nevertheless you of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America are linked by tradition and inter-communion with Canterbury, as your Roman Catholic countrymen are linked with Rome,

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and your Orthodox brothers with Constantinople. The insular accidents of English Church history have for good and for evil affected the form and character and history of the Anglican Communion throughout the world.

The Church of England at the time of the Reformation was less radically protestantised than were the Churches of most other countries which threw off the supremacy of Rome. Doctrinally the influence of continental Reformers was strong, but institutional continuity was retained, together with a liturgy more or less Catholic in structure and type, an ecclesiastical Calendar of feast-days and fasts, and—in addition to the two greater sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist—the lesser sacraments of Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Penance (the latter on a voluntary basis, but enjoined, at least in theory, as the appropriate remedy for consciences disquieted or beset by scruples). In the seventeenth century Anglicanism was learnedly defended by great scholars and divines as a reformed and purified version of the Christianity of the New Testament and of the Fathers. Despite its official backing, it never commanded the allegiance of more than a variable proportion of the English people, and in the eighteenth century, after the loss of the Non-jurors, it had sunk to the level of a respectable state-establishment and little more. From this condition it was rescued by the two great Movements emanating from Oxford. The Evangelical Movement was the parent both of Wesleyanism and also of the Evangelical Party within the Church, the Tractarian Movement was the parent of Anglo-Catholicism.

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Both Movements in a sense have found inherited Anglicanism too narrow for them. The Evangelical Movement, in so far as it has remained within the parent Church, has conformed to Anglicanism as interpreted in the Evangelical sense, though there are elements in the Prayer Book system about which it has never been comfortable. But it has looked beyond the borders of Anglicanism to Evangelical Christianity at large, is at the present time anxious for reunion with English Nonconformity and with Protestant Christianity in general, and has borrowed religious usages and modes of worship supplementary to the Prayer Book from Protestant sources. The Oxford Movement was originally simply a High Church Movement, meticulously Anglican, careful of precedent, archæological in outlook, seeking its inspiration in the past, appealing to the New Testament and to the Fathers of the first six centuries of Christianity. When it moved out into the parishes and gave its strength to the work of reviving and building up Church life, especially in the slums of the great cities, it became naturally more romantic and adventurous. It revived ceremonial. It revived the Religious Life, both for men and for women. It ceased to be limited by the first six centuries, and like the Evangelical Movement it has looked beyond the borders of Anglicanism. It has borrowed religious usages and modes of worship from Catholic Christianity in general, and more immediately from Rome. Necessarily it rejects the distinctively Roman position and the claims of the Papacy, but it has lost its original anti-Romanism.

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It is anxious for reunion with Catholic Christianity generally—that is to say, with Rome and with the East.

Common to both these Movements is the refusal any longer to walk respectably along the sober *via media* of official Anglicanism, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left. Common to both is a certain measure of conformity, a readiness to use in general the English Prayer Book, though with a considerable variety both of ceremonial and of adaptation of the services; but common to both also is a refusal to have devotions and modes of worship rigorously prescribed by statute law. Meanwhile the intellectual movement of theological liberalism, represented by the old Broad Church party and by the so-called 'Modern Churchmen' of to-day, is increasingly strong. The utterances of its representatives from time to time not unnaturally cause alarm to the conservative stalwarts both of the 'Evangelical' and of the 'Catholic' wing, as well as to the centrally-minded orthodox Anglicans of the older generation, who still undoubtedly exist. Nevertheless, the purely negative and destructive effects of historical criticism have probably by now been fully, or almost fully, experienced, and the movement of critical theology is entering upon a more reconstructive stage. What the Liberals have secured in the Church of England is freedom of thought, as the other two parties have secured freedom of spiritual life and of devotion. A split on any considerable scale in the Church of England is highly improbable, and the gains of all three of the traditional parties are likely to be

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permanent. The way lies open for the constructive Anglicanism of the future.

But in the end it will cease to be Anglicanism : it will simply be Christianity, Catholic, evangelical, and free. The hope of the future lies in the fact that the younger generation are impatient of parties, and are not disposed to be bound by the narrowly Anglican precedents of the past. They are no longer in danger of confusing an insular sect with the Church of the living God, and they are more interested in spiritual reality and truth than in sixteenth-century tradition. They are anxious to lengthen their cords and to strengthen their stakes. They have little use either for partisanship on the one hand, or for moderation and compromise on the other. They will not walk along the narrow path of sober, restrained, and reasonable Anglicanism, hedged in by high walls, on the other side of which are attractive religious and devotional practices labelled conspicuously ' Prohibited,' and thereby invested with the irresistible glamour of forbidden fruit. There are *enfants terribles* among them—extremists of all parties who care little for Church order : and no doubt the authority of Bishops is flouted, sometimes conspicuously so by those who are in theory the strongest champions of episcopacy. It is felt that the *ipse dixit* of a Bishop who is appointed by the State, and who represents simply the moderate and official point of view, settles no questions. There are extreme Protestants, extreme Liberals, and extreme Romanisers.

But there is also an increasing disposition to look forward to a genuine synthesis of extremes,

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and an increasing readiness for the mutual toleration of divergent 'uses' within the fellowship of one evangelical and Catholic Church. The point of view of the Liberals is fast penetrating the other two traditional parties, and is preparing the way for mutual understanding without in the process destroying spiritual fervour or definiteness of spiritual conviction. The appearance of such a book as the volume recently published under the title of *Liberal Evangelicalism*¹ is clear evidence that the leaders of younger evangelical thought are prepared to make terms with Liberalism, and also to make some approach towards an understanding of Anglo-Catholicism. The Liberalism may be as yet of a mild order, and Anglo-Catholics may feel that the understanding of sacramentalism does not go all the way; but the book is a welcome indication of an advance in both directions. The Anglo-Catholic movement, on the other hand, has been described as being 'honey-combed with Modernism,' a statement in which there is an element of exaggeration and of malice, and at the same time an element of truth. Anglo-Catholicism is conservative in public (except ecclesiastically), and includes a large reactionary wing. But it includes also, by general acknowledgment, some of the best of the younger brains and scholarship of the Church of England. Its real tendencies are not summed up in any adequate fashion by Shakespeare's lines:

Report of fashions in proud Italy,
Whose manners still our tardy, apish nation
Limps after in base imitation;

¹ Hodder & Stoughton, 1923.

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nor are its more thoughtful members prepared to be simply, in the scornful phrase of a nineteenth century occupant of S. Peter's Chair, 'Papists without a Pope, Catholics without unity, and Protestants without liberty.'

What attracts men to Anglo-Catholicism, and in fact makes them desire to describe themselves simply as Christians and Catholics *sans phrase*, is primarily the Catholic idea. They desire to have the consciousness of belonging to something which is more than an insular sect, which has spiritual affinities with international Christianity, and with the Catholic Church of history. They desire to claim as their own the common inheritance of liturgical worship and ceremonial, of Catholic sacramentalism and spiritual discipline, of mysticism and objectivity in worship; and they are unable to see any incompatibility between these things and the truths for which Evangelicalism stands. Despite all the coquetting with Rome, and the frequently somewhat ludicrous narrowness and littleness of mind which are displayed by the camp-followers of Anglo-Catholicism, the abler among the younger leaders of the movement are perfectly well aware that the only justification for any attempt to develop a Catholic outlook, and to revive Catholic methods of worship and of discipline, in a Church other than that of Rome, lies in the conviction that Catholicism is capable of being reconciled with freedom, and can be maintained upon the basis of a wholly different conception of religious authority than that of Rome, or than that of conservative Tractarianism. It is recognised that the conception of ecclesiastical

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infallibility, at least as ordinarily understood, is not maintainable, any more than is the conception of infallibility as applied to the Bible. It is recognised further that the ideal of a dragooned uniformity of spiritual practice and worship must be frankly abandoned.

This means that the Catholic ideal and the Catholic presentation of Christianity must be content to make its appeal, and gradually to prevail, upon its merits ; and it is not likely permanently to prevail very widely unless it is combined with a real Evangelicalism and a real intellectual freedom. The ideal must be synthetic, and there must be allowance for diversities of temperament and for diversities of mind. In the Church of the future men will be free to follow frankly the Catholic way, to use Catholic devotions, and to express themselves outwardly in Catholic ceremonial and symbolism. But they will be free equally to follow frankly the Evangelical way, and to express themselves correspondingly in worship. And there is hope, on the basis of freedom, of a genuine *rapprochement* between the two ways. There is hope that Evangelicals may come to value and use increasingly Catholic methods of sacramental worship and discipline and to understand the Catholic vision of the Church. There is hope also that Anglo-Catholics may learn increasingly to give the primacy to the Evangelical Gospel, and to interpret in a less rigidly mechanical and more truly evangelical spirit the Church's institutional and sacramental system. They will not persuade Evangelicals to accept what they have to contribute unless they can succeed in making it

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clear that their doctrine of sacraments is not magical or their doctrine of priesthood superstitious : in particular, that in the spiritual discipline of sacramental penance, as advocated and valued by Anglo-Catholics, there is maintained a scrupulous respect for individual personality and freedom, of which the effects are manifest in the building up and deepening, and not in the enervation, of moral character. Through all Church institutionalism and sacramentalism the wind of the unfettered Spirit must freely blow, and scope be given to the word of the prophet and to the wisdom of the wise, as well as to the tradition of the priest.

And the fruit of the Spirit will be seen not only in love and joy and peace, but also in sacrifice and spiritual heroism and service. The Church's outlook must be kept wide and her mind broad, that so she may be filled with boldness and fervent zeal not only to proclaim to all the world a Gospel in the redemptive power of which she utterly believes, but also to think out and to make clear the bearings of that Gospel upon all the questions of to-day. An ecclesiastical civilisation, indeed, in the mediæval sense the world will never know again. The spiritual autonomy, within their own respective spheres, of Art and Science, of Literature and Politics and Philosophy, is finally established. There are activities and duties and ideals, there are even social and moral ends in human life, which are not *distinctively* religious, though all are capable of being pursued in a religious temper, and of being fused together with religion itself into the harmony of the ideal life of the spirit, to which there is nothing

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common or profane. The Church of the future will never again, please God, attempt to dictate to the intellectual disciplines and activities connected with these relatively non-religious ends of life, will never again seek to prescribe beforehand either their methods or their conclusions.

And yet the question may well be asked, How then can there be any assurance of harmony at all ? Is there not likely to be continuing discord and tension between the ends and values recognised by Religion in the narrower sense and those recognised and pursued respectively by Science and Philosophy and Art, between the claims of Christ and the claims of Culture, between economic necessities, or what may appear at least to be such, and the religious ethic of the Gospels ? Is there any escape in the end from the essential paganism of modern life ?

I can see no complete answer to this problem, but there are partial answers to be given. It is clear, in the first place, that there is a hierarchy of ends, and that economic necessity may not be pleaded as justifying the exploitation of the poor. There are social and moral evils in modern society with which the Church must necessarily join issue. There are crying sins to be fought in the power and in the name of the living Christ. There can be no compromise with the spirit of evil.

In the second place, in proportion as individuals, peoples, and nations became genuinely christianised, the Spirit of Christ would increasingly inspire and permeate industrial and political and national affairs, and a Christian, though not in the narrow sense an ecclesiastical, civilisation might arise ; a civilisation,

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indeed, more fundamentally and deeply Christian than that achieved by the compromise of mediæval times, precisely for the reason that the Church would be content to be in relation to world-civilisation as the soul to the body, inspiring the life of nations from within, instead of seeking to dominate them from without.

In the third place it can be argued that the conflict and tension between the claims of Religion and those of the other ideal ends of life is not, and can never be, absolute, inasmuch as all spiritual truth and beauty everywhere, as well as all moral goodness, is ultimately from God: and further, that a continuous and relative tension between the ends of Religion and those of Science, Philosophy, and Art is essential, both as stimulant and as discipline, to the life, on its intellectual side, of Religion itself. For this very reason it is of vital importance that Religion should learn, in the very interests of Religion itself, to respect and value the autonomy, the competition and criticism of what Von Hügel describes as the 'other centres' of the life of the spirit.¹ The resolution of the conflict, which is indeed a real one, and which has supplied the theme of the Russian writer Merejkowski's great trilogy of novels,² is not to be looked for on this side of the grave but in the ultimate Kingdom of the Spirit.

It would seem that the times are becoming ripe for a new Renaissance of Christianity, in which he that believeth shall not make haste. The painful

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

² English translations under the titles of *The Death of the Gods*, *The Fore-runner*, and *Peter and Alexis*.

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lessons of past history are gradually being learnt, and the fruits of the work of scholars and of thinkers and of the prayers and sufferings of saints are in some measure beginning to appear. The fissiparous tendencies of post-Reformation Christianity have passed their zenith : the vision of unity is once more dawning upon men's minds. Many things may be hoped from the coming World Conference, or succession of World Conferences, upon Faith and Order, in connexion with which a series of questionnaires has been prepared and issued, to which answers are being returned by representative groups all over the world. In England negotiations are being carried on between the leaders of Anglicanism and a number of chosen delegates of the various Evangelical Free Churches. There are approaches towards an understanding between the Church of England and that of Sweden, and again between Anglicanism and the Orthodox Churches of the East. The continued and definite refusal of the Church of Rome to co-operate or to take any direct interest in any of these movements, however intelligible and probably inevitable from the Roman standpoint, is a spiritual disaster. A reunion from which the premier denomination of Christendom was self-excluded would be less than an ecumenical reunion of Christendom.

Apart from the Roman question, the reunion of Christendom will not be hastily achieved. There is work to be done of a preparatory kind in the education of Christian public opinion. There are problems, both ecclesiastical and theological, to be solved, which may easily employ the best energies

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of two or more generations of Christian thought. It is easy to suggest that, in the interests of efficiency, the divided forces of Christendom ought to unite. But apart from the fact that an appeal to efficiency is not precisely the highest ground that could be taken, the real difficulties only begin to emerge when the actual problems involved are at once theoretically and practically faced. Probably the first stages will be the reunion of some of the smaller and less deeply-divided denominations among themselves, and such partial reunions within Protestant Christianity are already in process here and there of being actually accomplished.

But it is comparatively easy for denominations to unite which have no particularly deep or serious grounds of divergence to constitute a reason for continued division. The really deep cleavage within Christianity is that which exists between Protestants and Catholics. The fact that, as the result of historical causes, the two traditions in some measure coexist side by side in the Church of England inevitably means that the Anglicanism of the future, like that of to-day, will be called upon to play an essentially mediatorial rôle. By those who, in this matter of reunion, are content to look merely to the reunion of Protestant Christianity, the existence of Anglo-Catholicism is regarded with dislike as an inevitable hindrance. Those, on the other hand, who refuse to stop short of the wider, if more distant, vision of the reunion of Christendom, must inevitably regard Anglo-Catholicism as a movement which has been called into being by the Spirit of God. It will hinder, undoubtedly, the

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immediate prospects of reunion between the Anglican Communion and Protestant Christianity, regarded simply as a kind of Evangelical Alliance ; but if it really succeeds in achieving (in the first instance, within Anglicanism itself) a genuine synthesis, on the basis of freedom, between the Catholic and the Evangelical conceptions of Christianity, and between Evangelical and Catholic religious practice, it will have been instrumental in laying the future foundations of religious unity in the only sense in which unity is really worth having—that is to say, as a synthesis of differences ; and it will thereby have rendered a service of unique importance and priceless value to the movement for Christian Reunion as a whole.

Meanwhile it is clear that the Anglican Church can never be party, save at the cost of creating fresh schism in the very act of attempting to achieve unity, to any scheme of partial reunion upon such lines as would have the effect of making impossible the position of Anglo-Catholics within her borders, or of impairing their freedom ; nor can any scheme of reunion, however carefully safeguarded and thought out by responsible leaders, be imposed on the Church by authority without the consent of the rank and file and the conversion of the indifferent majority. The reunion of Christendom, whensoever and in whatever form it takes place, will not be the result of a quasi-political scheme : it will be the result of the deep passionate longing of many hearts, of the very fervent desire of those who have seen the vision afar off, of heartfelt and corporate repentance and earnest prayer. It will be the

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work not primarily of man, but of the Spirit of God.

As the Roman Church, in a sense, is a kind of microcosm of all the religions of humanity, so is the Anglican Church a microcosm of Christendom, and it is this fact which constitutes her distinctive mission and vocation. Nevertheless we look forward with confident hope to the day when the Church of England as such shall have disappeared, shall have perished as a separate entity, and shall have been merged in the wider synthetic unity of the Catholic and Evangelical Christendom that is to be. In that day, if not indeed at some earlier date, the XXXIX Articles of Religion, in common with the Westminster Confession and with every other symbol of separation, will have been consigned without regret to the limbo of discarded and half-forgotten associations of the past. The vision of unity which this generation has seen will never be let go ; and he that believeth shall not make haste.

It has been said that to-day a Catholic tendency goes through the world. It is a tendency not towards Rome but towards synthesis and unity. Let me try to put into words the vision of the Church of Christ on earth as it might be hereafter, the prophetic vision as it hovers before our eyes. The ideal, then, is of a Church system which shall give supremacy above all things else to the eternal Gospel of God's free grace and redemptive love in Jesus Christ, and which shall proclaim the primacy of the two great commandments of love towards God and of love towards man ; a Church system, therefore, which shall be genuinely evangelical and

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genuinely free ; at the same time a Church system which shall comprise within itself, held together in a free and elastic synthesis and genuinely penetrated by the inner spirit of the Gospel, those various elements of institutional and sacramental religion, of popular religious custom and devotional practice and spiritual mysticism, of moral discipline and of intellectual thought, which do not directly flow from the Gospel itself, but which nevertheless form part of the historic inheritance of Christianity.

In such a Church there will be ascetics and contemplatives, side by side with men of practical affairs. There will be orders of monks and communities of nuns. There will be friars, called like S. Francis of Assisi to the life of literal renunciation and literal poverty, as well as rich men called only to the life of inner detachment from the perilous entanglements of wealth. The vocation to marriage and the vocation to celibacy will be held in equal honour, and God will be served equally, though in different ways, by layman and by ecclesiastic, by thinker and artisan and poet, by employer and by employed. There will be room and scope for every variety of calling and of temperament, and for every legitimately Christian point of view. The life of the spirit, being rooted in the things eternal, will for that very reason effectively transform the things of time. The antithesis between ' this-worldly ' and ' other-worldly ' religion will disappear, inasmuch as it will be recognised that true religion is necessarily both. And the Church, therefore, will labour as well as pray that God's will may be done on earth, without in the process forgetting that the fashion

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of this world passeth away, and that the goal of all spiritual fulfilment lies in the world that is beyond death and change.

Into such a Church system, free, elastic, evangelical, and genuinely Catholic, whatever in experience has been found to make for spiritual life and for spiritual truth—the positive contributions, though not the controversial negations and denials, of all existing denominations of Christianity—might be brought without either sacrifice of present good or treachery to the past. Upon such a basis, but upon such a basis alone, it is no idle dream to hope that in the providence of God the synthetic unity of Christendom may one day be achieved.

In such a Church, moreover, the truth of God will be proclaimed with the authority at once of Revelation and of corporate tradition. And the authority of tradition will be a real authority, for the reason that tradition will be free. The *consensus fidelium* will be a free consensus of scholars and of saints, living the Christian life and thinking freely about its meaning, heeding the wisdom of the past and at the same time continuously relating the intellectual interpretation of the faith to the continuous movement of thought and knowledge, bringing things new and old out of their treasure-house, trusting the prevalence of truth, and in case of conflict preferring truth above tradition.

And the truth itself will make men free. There will be no need for the negative freedom of revolt and of denial, though this negative freedom itself will not be wanting, inasmuch as in such a Church there will be no constraint save that of love. Strong

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in the power and in the confidence of truth, the Church will be able to afford to abstain from excommunicating men for heresy, and to prefer the rational authority of consensus to the dragooned uniformity secured by discipline at the price of schism. The wind of the Spirit will freely blow through dogmas, usages, and institutions, the Church will live not only in the past but in the present and in the future, and the Gospel will be proclaimed with converting efficacy and power ; and converts will be trained and guided and built up in the practices and principles of spiritual life in Jesus Christ, and of the worship of Almighty God. Into the places of worship of such a Church the profiteer and the harlot, the poor Magdalen and the rich Zacchaeus, will both alike freely enter, and there will be no appropriated seats. But the Magdalen will become S. Mary Magdalene, and Zacchaeus will bestow half of his goods to feed the poor, and will restore fourfold the gains that had been ill-gotten, and salvation will come to Zacchaeus' house.

And in free allegiance to such a Church (but not, as I think, to any other), the world itself might one day be religiously made one, and civilisation be made Christian. But that will not be upon the basis of any kind of ecclesiastical regimentation or control. It can only be upon the basis of a spiritual authority which is content to bear its undaunted witness to spiritual truth and supernatural grace in the power and might of truth and of grace alone, which respects alike the freedom of individuals, groups, and nations, and the autonomy, within their respective spheres, of Science and Philosophy and Art. The spiritual

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life of the Church itself will be in large measure stimulated and nourished by the tension and discipline of apparent conflict between the directly religious and the relatively non-religious ends and interests of the spirit, and the Church will be content to look for a reconciliation of conflicting claims, wherever in any degree legitimate claims to all appearances permanently conflict, in the unity of that Divine Kingdom of which the ultimate reality lies beyond the region of things transitory and seen, and where absolute Beauty, Goodness, and Truth are eternally unified in God.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

THE DOCTRINE OF ECCLESIASTICAL INFALLIBILITY

THE doctrine of the Infallibility of the Church, which, like that of the Infallibility of the Bible, I have proposed frankly to discard, is sometimes defended and interpreted in such a fashion as to leave a good deal of room for the kind of intellectual freedom which it is essential to preserve in the Christian Church. On a minimising view it can be taken to mean no more than is asserted by the Rev. N. P. Williams in the discussion between him and the late Dr. Sanday, published under the title of *Form and Content in the Christian Tradition*, viz., 'though the Divine control was very far from being "complete," . . . there was, nevertheless, just enough of it to preserve the Christian Church from laying down as of faith propositions which were definitely false or misleading (and this is all that "infallibility"—in-capacity for deceiving or being deceived—really means).' ¹

If I understand Mr. Williams aright, he would regard infallibility, in the sense just defined, as attaching only to the propositions included in the Creeds and in the decisions of such Councils as are commonly ranked as 'Ecumenical'; and I should agree with him in regarding it as highly improbable that the doctrinal statements contained in the Creeds and in the 'ecumenical' decisions will ever come to be regarded by the central mass of corporate Christian conviction as having been 'definitely false or misleading.' It appears to me that the documents in question will always have a permanent value for

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

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Christian theology, and that in view of the wide consensus of Christian conviction which they represent, they are invested (on the hypothesis that the Christian Church, in working out its theology, has not been without the guidance of the Spirit) with a high degree of rational authority.

But if this is all that is to be meant by 'infallibility,' it seems better frankly to discard the term, as being itself liable to mislead. In Mr. Williams' usage 'infallibility' appears to be a kind of honorary rank bestowed upon a strictly limited number of the doctrinal statements of the past, on the ground partly of their widespread acceptance, and partly of their central position and importance in the general scheme of orthodox Christian doctrine. The really important question is the question whether it is possible to draw a clear and definite distinction between 'infallible' and 'fallible' decisions of Church Authority. The view which I wish to repudiate is the view that there exists a kind of core or nucleus of Christian teaching, formulated and stereotyped for all time in terms so finally adequate as to constitute a series of doctrinal propositions which must be simply taken or simply left, and which are exempt from rational criticism, in a sense in which ordinary Christian teaching is not so exempt. To the plain man the doctrine of Ecclesiastical Infallibility is apt to suggest this, and I am not sure that it does not imply something of the kind even to Mr. Williams. To my own mind it does not appear that *any* of the authoritative utterances of the past ought to be regarded as being exempt in principle from the rational criticism of the present or of the future; it appears impossible to draw a distinction *in kind* between the authority of Creeds and Councils and that of other traditional forms of Christian teaching; and it appears indisputable that in the name of a Church Authority which has claimed for itself the attribute of infallibility, intellectual error has at various times and in varying degrees been taught.

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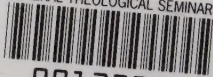
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